

# APPENDICES

# Appendix 1

Written response received from  
National Fire Authority



# Clarification of Issues – National Fire Authority Annual Report for the 7 Months Period Ended 31 July 2016

# **NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY'S CORPORATE STATEMENTS**

## **VISION**

**Resilient Communities with effective Emergency Services.**

## **MISSION**

**To preserve life, property and the environment through community education, disaster and emergency risk reduction and dedicated, caring and efficient quality service.**

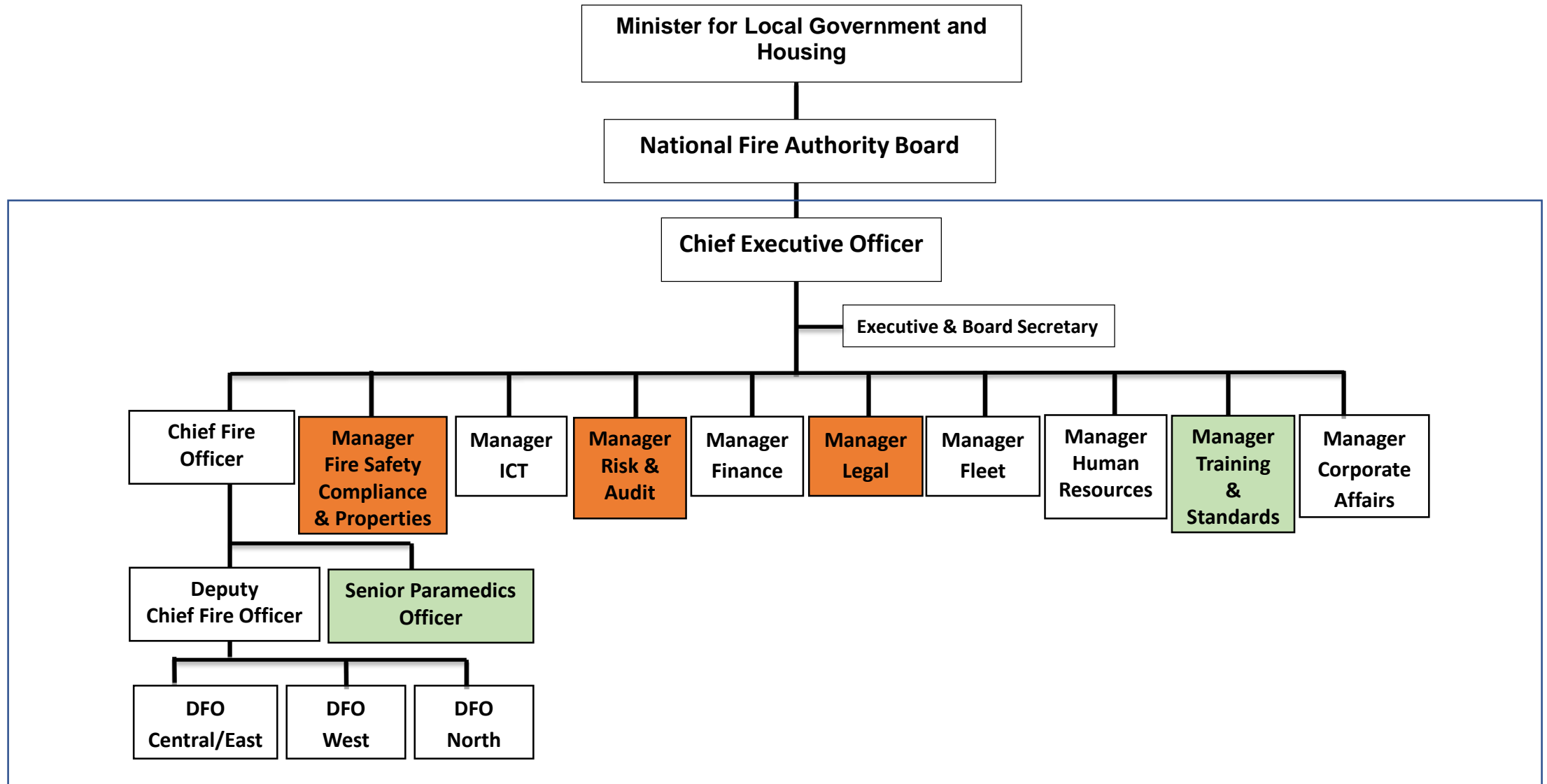
## **VALUES**

- **Service Excellence**
- **Discipline**
- **Loyalty & Commitment**
- **Teamwork**
- **Innovation**

## **MOTTO**

- **ALWAYS READY!**

# NFA ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



# NFA'S CORE ROLES





## NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

**Vision:** Resilient Communities with effective Emergency Services.

**Mission:** To preserve Life, Property and the Environment through community education, disaster and Emergency risk reduction and dedicated, caring, efficient Quality Services.

Strategic Goal 1	Strategic Goal 2	Strategic Goal 3	Strategic Goal 4	Strategic Goal 5
<p><b>Safety &amp; Prevention</b></p> <p>Deliver effective proactive prevention, preparedness and emergency recovery through a range of key activities including improving community education and engagement, compliance with building codes, enhancing synergies across multi-sector agencies and foster community resilience.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduced likelihood of unwanted fires.</li> <li>2. Increased preparedness for fires &amp; emergencies.</li> <li>3. Strengthened mechanisms for improved building safety and protection of critical facilities.</li> <li>4. Good alignment of goals and policies.</li> <li>5. Improved level of fire safety.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Exceptional fire and emergency services</b></p> <p>Enhance our service model to improve the response to fires and all emergencies including the provision of exceptional pre-hospital treatment to reduce the impact to life, property and the environment.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved quality of response to fires &amp; emergencies</li> <li>2. Improved readiness for emergencies.</li> <li>3. Well established professional Emergency Ambulance Service.</li> <li>4. Emergency Medical Service is expedited.</li> <li>5. Well-coordinated and increased preparedness for emergencies.</li> </ol>	<p><b>NFA Sustainability</b></p> <p>Build a financially sustainable model that will realize the generation of adequate funding and long term investments to meet the demands of NFA's core operations, strengthen internal governance, asset management systems and upgrade, support functions and financial sustainability and gain the confidence and trust of communities and all stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Financial sustainability.</li> <li>2. Increased capability (equipment, systems and support functions).</li> <li>3. Well positioned for future expansion.</li> <li>4. Financial integrity and credibility.</li> <li>5. Early mitigation and risk reduction.</li> </ol>	<p><b>People Strategy</b></p> <p>Good leadership and governance is essential for driving strategy, implementing change and enhancing productivity and employee satisfaction through the implementation of effective personal and professional development and reward and recognition frameworks.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effective leadership and governance.</li> <li>2. Safety, health &amp; wellbeing of the team.</li> <li>3. Clear career pathways and succession plans.</li> <li>4. Increased Technical Skills.</li> <li>5. Effective employment relations with Staff</li> <li>6. Appropriate recognition &amp; reward framework</li> </ol>	<p><b>NFA Transformation</b></p> <p>Transform NFA to become an internationally recognized organization that strictly operates under Quality Management principles based on international best practices to strengthen the Authority's roles and services supported by modern technology and legislations.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regulatory environment enabling all sectors to understand NFA's legal obligations and jurisdictions</li> <li>2. Clear and concise Standards available to Stakeholders and the Public.</li> <li>3. Accessible and Reliable Information Technology.</li> <li>4. Strengthened public image of NFA.</li> </ol>

### Our Values:

Service Excellence

Discipline

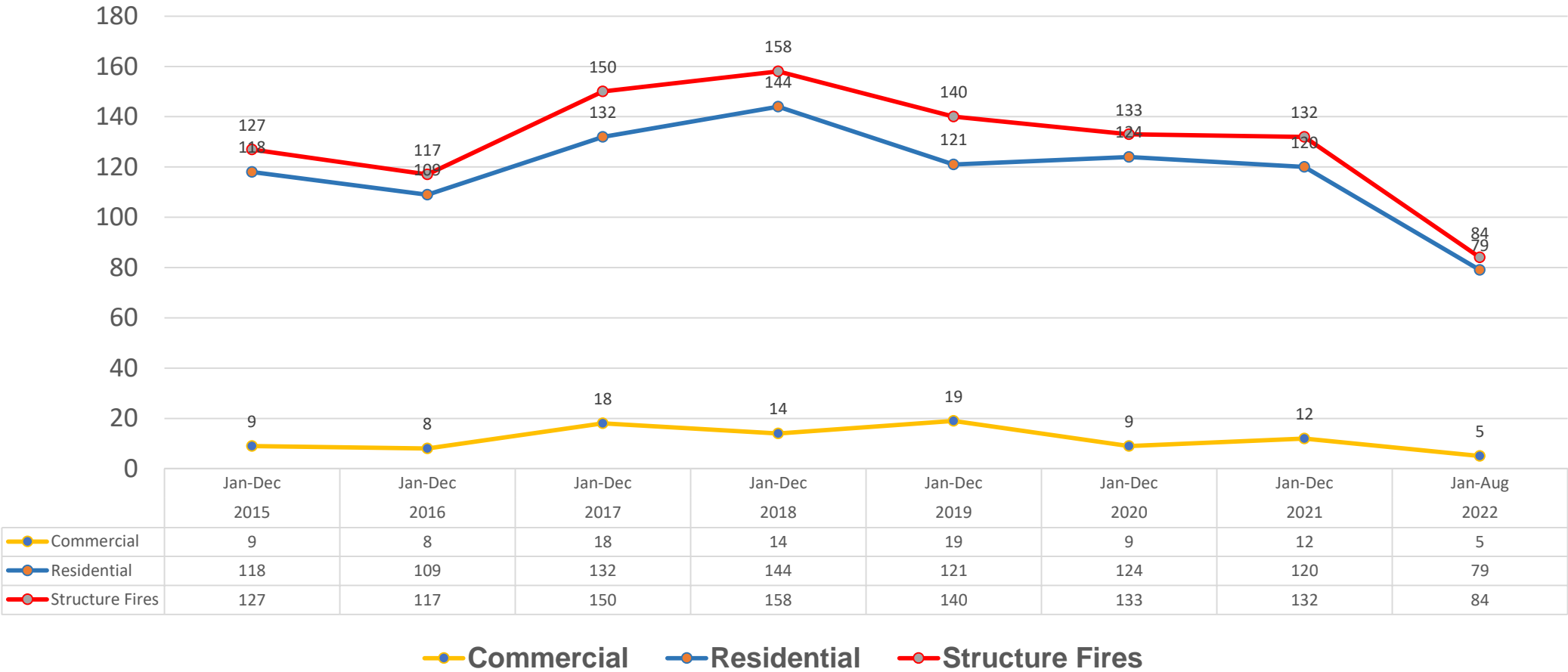
Loyalty & Commitment

Team-work

Innovation

# ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURAL FIRES – 7 YEARS

## Analysis of Structural Fires Jan 2015-Aug 2022





# ANALYSIS OF ESTIMATED LOSS DUE TO FIRE DAMAGES (7 YEARS)

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total	Annual Average
	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Aug	2015-2022	
Structural Fires	127	147	150	158	140	133	132	84	1,071	140
Fire Deaths	9	8	18	3	8	6	6	4	62	8
Total Cost of Damages	\$14.8m	\$16.6m	\$14.1m	\$23.5m	\$22.1m	\$13.0m	\$15.1m	\$11.9m	\$130.9m	\$17.1m
Total Cost to NFA	\$263k	\$242k	\$215k	\$257k	\$131k	\$121k	\$404k	\$144k	\$1.8m	\$232k

## ANALYSIS OF NFA RESOURCES – 7 YEARS PROGRESS

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Aug
Fire Station coverage	16	18*	18	18	18	20*	21*	21
Human Resource	411	428	485	525	626	624	608	595

\* New Stations - Korolevu & Korovou (2016), Nakasi & Lami (2020), Nabouwalu (2021)

# ANALYSIS OF NFA VEHICLE FLEET – 7 YEARS PROGRESS

Station	Scania	Pumper	Tanker	Rescue	Ambu- lance	Light Rescue	7-Tonne Truck	Twin Cabs	Executive Vehicles	Total Vehicle Fleet	Fleet Efficiency
	Ladder Fire Truck	(Includes Scania MFA)									
2015	3	22	22	3	7	3	1	8	3	72	84.3%
2016	3	23	28	3	7	3	1	8	3	79	79.3%
2017	3	21	27	3	9	3	1	8	3	78	76.4%
2018	3	20	26	3	11	3	1	14	3	84	73.0%
2019	3	18	27	5	11	-	1	23	2	92	70.3%
2020	3	13	30	5	10	1	1	22	3	87	82.4%
2021	3	13	30	5	10	1	1	22	3	88	78.7%
2022 Jan-Aug	3	13	30	5	9	1	1	22	2	86	79.0%
	Average Annual Fleet Efficiency Rate										70.3%

# STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE NFA'S SERVICES AND REVENUE

## ANNUAL COSTED OPERATIONAL PLANS

1. Annual Costed Operational Plans operationalize each Year of the NFA 5-year Strategic Plan 2021-2026 to realise NFA's Vision of: **Resilient Communities with Effective Emergency Services.**
2. The Costed Operational Plan 2022-2023 provides the following **strategies to improve NFA's services and revenue** in accordance with the 5 Strategic Goals:

### Strategic Goal 1 – Safety & Prevention

- **Inspection of all businesses for fire safety compliance.**
- Conduct of fire safety training in all relevant businesses.
- Investigate all structural fires and implement fire safety awareness framework.
- **Implement Community Fire Warden programs to another 30 communities.**
- Review of the National Building Code of Fiji.
- Hold meetings with the various communities for their commitment towards fire safety.
- Inspect fire safety level for residential communities including boarding schools, educational institutes, Senior Citizens' Home, Special Schools, Hospitals, Places of Worship, government buildings.
- Completion and implementation of NFA's BCP/DRP.

## ANNUAL COSTED OPERATIONAL PLANS

### **Strategic Goal 2 – Exceptional Fire & Emergency Services**

- Improve NFA response time with establishment of Sub-Stations.
- Certification of forest industries to have their own firefighting capability.
- Implement new technology equipment such as aerial drones for effective surveillance.
- Launch of new NFA Command Centre.
- Check and test all existing fire hydrants for pressure and flow rate output to 1000L per minute and shortfalls reported and discussed with WAF for improvement.
- Replacement of old and obsolete fire appliances, equipment and PPCs.
- Identify skills shortfalls and address through proper training and mitigation.
- Secure assistance from Country Fire Authority or Ambulance Victoria to enhance service delivery standards, equipment and staff development of NFA's Emergency Ambulance Services.
- Develop expansion plan for equipping of all NFA Stations with an Ambulance and adequate medical equipment in line for timely provision of NFA's services.
- Seek Ministerial approval to activate National and Divisional Coordination Committees as per the National Fire Service (Amendment) Act, 2009.

# ANNUAL COSTED OPERATIONAL PLANS

## **Strategic Goal 3 – NFA Sustainability**

- Pursue opportunities to implement paperless transactions.
- Conduct regular audits of all NFA processes to ensure compliance.
- Achieve and exceed Total Income target of \$22m.
- Identify new revenue streams, review fees and charges and strengthen revenue collection mechanisms in consultation with relevant Department Heads.
- Stringent management and monitoring of utilization of all assets for reduction in expenditure.
- Manage and control of operational costs for reduction in overhead costs.
- Construction of New Navua Fire Station and Specialized Resources (Govt funded 2022/2023).
- Vigorously pursue donor funding for significant NFA projects.
- Ensure adequate General and Medical Insurance cover for NFA assets and people.

# ANNUAL COSTED OPERATIONAL PLANS

## **Strategic Goal 4 – People Strategy**

- Engage Consultant to assist with development of Framework for Competency, Capability and Succession Planning.
- Engagement of Manager Training to coordinate and facilitate staff development and training programs.
- Compile Annual Reports on receipt of signed audited financials, seek Board approval, arrange printing and submit printed copies to line Minister.
- Health screening of all the Staff on quarterly basis and conduct Required Fitness Level tests.
- Develop a holistic training program capturing individual development plans
- Conduct recruitment of new firefighters (70)
- Implement the recognition & rewards framework including promotion courses



# ANNUAL COSTED OPERATIONAL PLANS

## Strategic Goal 5 – NFA Transformation

- Submit Cabinet paper and draft FESA Bill to line Minister.
- Submit for gazette the Regulation for Licensing of Fire Agents.
- License and certify importation of all fire safety equipment eg fire extinguishers, fire rated building materials, etc.
- Develop relevant policies to fully implement Fire Service Levy Order.
- Develop National Fire Safety Standards for inspection of residential premises.
- Develop Regulation for compulsory installation of fire alarm system in all commercial and high-risk buildings.
- Develop NFA's 20-year Integrated Development Plan in consultation with relevant key stakeholders and submit for Board approval.
- Establishment of a new NFA Head Quarters and a new Fire Academy.
- Secure vacant land in Matei, Keiyasi, Waimecia, Vunidawa, Kadavu, Rotuma, Sabeto, Denarau, Dreketi, Tukavesi, Wainikoro, Rabi.
- Application of Fire Service Levy on insured vehicles.
- Draft Framework for Licensing & Certification of Private Fire Safety Inspectors.
- Pursue ISO 9001: 2015 QMS certification
- Celebration of 100 years establishment of Fire Service in Fiji.

# STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE NFA REVENUE

## 1. Extension of Fire Boundaries

- Potential avenue for increasing NFA's revenue involving:
  - increase in remittances of water levies
  - increase in fire service levy remittances
- NFA needs to meet the criteria for boundary extensions, namely:
  - Services of the Authority are required outside municipal boundaries.
  - Capacity of the Authority to meet Fire Services, if needed.
  - Willingness of the community to assist the Authority to establish good fire service and emergency relations.
- 48% property fires attended have been outside current fire boundaries.
- Increase in number of Fire Stations has increased NFA's service coverage and capability.
- NFA has already submitted a proposal for gazette of the new fire boundaries.

## 2. Regulating the Fire Industry

- Regulations currently being drafted to regulate the fire industry.
- The Regulations will enable NFA to issue licenses for Fire agents to operate, import and sell fire fighting equipment and safety products in accordance with NFA standards.

# STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE NFA REVENUE

## 3. Fire Service Levy on Motor Vehicles

- Implementation of the Fire Service Levy Order relating to insured properties including vehicles.

## 4. Review Fees and Charges

- Review NFA's current fees and charges relating to:
  - Fire Service Levy from 0.06% (since 1995)
  - Water Levy from \$6.00/annum/water meter (since 1995)
  - Structural Fire Safety services (since 2008)
  - Commercial Training charges (since 2008)
  - Private Fire Alarm calls (since 2008)
- Review is necessary due to the rise in operational costs over the recent years.

## 5. Appointment of Dedicated Inspectors

- The Authority on July 8<sup>th</sup> appointed 32 dedicated Structural Fire Safety Inspectors to inspect buildings/businesses and conduct fire safety training
- This will enable the Authority to carry out more inspections for fire safety compliance and provide the required fire safety training

1. Can NFA elaborate with a breakdown on the revenue of \$8.1 million collected for the seven months period ended 31 July 2016 as compared to \$7.4 million for the same period in 2015?

The details of the revenue breakdown are as follows:

Income	For the 7 months ended 31 July 2016 \$	For the year ended 31 December 2015 \$
Amortisation of deferred revenue - Government grants	96,014	67,227
Amortisation of deferred revenue - hydrant grant	166,943	114,998
Fire levy contributions	5,716,560	9,917,472
Fire levy penalties	30,800	261,200
Ambulance grant	366,972	347,826
Ambulance income	45,570	-
Doubtful debts recovered	218,248	-
Private fire alarm rental, attendance and special services	143,559	243,275
Structural fire safety	373,495	943,755
Special services	228,134	4,033
Water levy contributions	248,458	253,750
Other income	548,046	615,767
	<u>8,182,799</u>	<u>12,769,303</u>

- **Amortization of deferred revenue** – Government Grants for Capital Project is first accounted as deferred revenue [liability] and once the project has been completed it is amortized to revenue.
- **Fire Levy contributions** – a levy of 0.06% of the sum insured on a property for the peril of fire is charged to the property owners. The Insurance companies and Brokers remit the sum to the Authority before the 21<sup>st</sup> of the following month.
- **Fire Levy Penalties** – a fixed penalty of \$2,000 and \$200 per day is charged to the insurance companies for remittance of Fire levy to NFA after the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the following month.
- **Ambulance Grant** – Government provides an annual Operating Grant for the operation and maintenance of Emergency Ambulance Services
- **Ambulance Income** – this is the income generated when ambulances are hired by the Ministry of Health for patient transfers between hospitals. The public is also charged for the transportation of patients to hospitals and also for standby attendance at major sporting events or public gatherings
- **Doubtful Debts recovered** – these debts were deemed as doubtful but were recovered from the debtors. The Authority is now providing services on a cash basis and those customers that require Authority's services are required to clear their debts first and pay upfront for required services.

- **Private fire Alarm** rental, attendance, and special services – there are properties that are mandated to be connected to an automatic fire monitoring system which is linked Authority's Command Center. Upon receiving the signal, the fire trucks are immediately dispatched to the property, and if it was a false alarm, a prescribed fee is charged for the run. The customers are required to pay an annual monitoring fee for the testing and servicing of the monitoring unit
- **Structural Fire Safety** – the Authority charges fees to the customers for Inspection of the Buildings for Fire Safety Compliance, Building Plan Vetting, Subdivisions Plan Vetting, Liquor Licenses, Fire Works Licenses, Fire Reports, and Commercial Training for Fire Drills, Evacuation Plans, and Fire Fighting Skills
- **Special Services** – fees are charged for pet and other rescues, cartage of emergency water, cleaning of towns and cities, hazard material spills containment, cleaning of swimming pools, standby of officers with equipment in graduation ceremonies, and/or any other paid standby requested.
- **Water Levy Contribution** – every Water Authority of Fiji [WAF] customer within the fire boundary is required to pay \$1.50 per quarter as a Fire Levy which WAF remits to the Authority upon payment of bills.
- **Other Income** – this comprises donations, bank interests, administration fees for payroll source deductions, monthly rentals for towers, investments interest earned, discount received, hire of the tent, and surcharge received.

**2. It was noted that there was a slight decrease in the income from Structural Fire Safety Compliance fees. This is due to the change in Government Policy for the exemption of SME's from paying inspection fees.**

- a. Can NFA identify who were these SME's that were exempted?**
- b. Can NFA elaborate on the impact of this policy change?**
- c. Was there a review to change the government policy or it remained?**

- a. In accordance with section 12A of the NFS Act, exempted SME's are those businesses whose annual gross turnover as certified by the Fiji Revenue & Customs Service does not exceed \$500,000.00. Although SME's business premises are still exempted, they are excluded from paying the inspection and certification fee if they can provide evidence that their annual gross turnover is below \$500,000.00.
- b. Even though the renewal of business license no longer required a fire safety compliance certificate, the Authority still carries out mandatory compliance checks on all SME's to ensure fire safety standards are maintained. However, SME's are exempted from paying the inspection fee if they provide an FRCS certificate that they earn below \$500,000.00.
- c. There has been no review of the government policy, the status quo remains the same to date.



**3. NFA's operational expenditure during the 7 months period ended 31 July 2016 was sustained through revenue generated from fire insurance levies, water levies, structural fire safety compliance earnings and other sources. Can NFA elaborate further on these levies and were there challenges on non-compliance?**

Fire Service Levy (FSL) is a levy on all insurance policies incepted in Fiji. The levy is 0.06% of the sum insured. The levy is collected and remitted to the Authority by the Insurance Companies & Brokers. This levy applies to insured properties situated within the fire boundaries. Water Levy is a levy on all water meters within a fire boundary. The levy is \$0.50 per month. The levy is collected by the Water Authority of Fiji who then remits the same to the NFA. The levies are not penalties per se but is a provision under the NFS Act to fund the fire service.

Even though the economic landscape of Fiji has changed since 1995, there has been no change to the sum levied to date; which was implemented in 1995. NFA would like to see a review of these levies with public consultation to ensure its sustainability in the long term. NFA continues to hold Talanoa sessions with the Insurance Companies and Brokers to ensure that there is a common application of fire service levy ensuring a standard application being applied across the board.

The legal framework under the NFS Act 1994 adequately provides the due process if there is non – compliance on the remittances of the levies. There is a penalty applicable if FSL is not remitted within the stipulated time which has always been an agenda during our Talanoa sessions with the Insurance Companies & Brokers.

#### 4. Can NFA update the committee on the capital expenditure that was carried out in the 7-month period ended 31 July 2016?

During the 7-month period, the Authority undertook the following Capital Projects:

Project	Funds Received	Update
Construction of Nabouwalu Fire Station	\$1,200,000	The station was commissioned on 29 <sup>th</sup> April 2022
Construction Rakiraki Fire Station	\$1,200,000	The station was commissioned on 27 <sup>th</sup> September 2019
Procurement of 20,000L Tanker	\$1,000,000	Tanker procured and fully operational in Suva
Procurement of Second-Hand Fire Trucks	\$400,000	The Authority purchased 7 x secondhand fire trucks in 2016. The seven comprised 3 x ISUZU fire trucks 4x4 and 4 x HINO fire trucks 4x4
Procurement of Fire Fighting Equipment	\$200,000	Firefighting equipment had been procured and is in use by the stations
Procurement of Fire Hydrants	\$900,000	Fire hydrants had been procured and installed by the Water Authority of Fiji around the country.

**5. NFA generated \$1.9 million during the 7 months period from the sales of goods and services. Can NFA elaborate on the types of goods and services that contributed to the generated amount (\$1.9 million)?**

**Details of Goods and Services that contributed to the generation of \$1.9M**

Income	Amount	Description
Amortization of deferred revenue – Government Grant	\$96,014	Government Grants for Capital Projects are first accounted as deferred revenue [liability] and once the project has been completed it is amortized to revenue
Amortization of deferred revenue - Hydrants	\$166,943	Government Grants for Capital Projects are first accounted as deferred revenue [liability] and once the project has been completed it is amortized to revenue
Commission	\$10,629	Fees received for at-source deductions from salaries
Fire Levy Penalty	\$30,800	A fixed penalty of \$2,000 and \$200 per day is charged to the insurance companies for remittance of Fire levy to NFA after the 21 <sup>st</sup> day of the following month
Ambulance income	\$45,570	Income derived from the hire of ambulances by MoH and Public
Doubtful Debts Recovered	\$218,248	These debts were deemed doubtful but were recovered from the debtors
Miscellaneous	\$38,514	Hire of the tent, surcharge received,
Rental Income	\$16,200	This is the rental income from 2 Vodafone towers
Special Services	\$228,134	Standby at Pernix Generator installation, standby at the Wailotua Chemical truck accident, standby at secondary school games, standby at rugby matches
TPAF Grant	\$28,582	TPAF Grant claimable training conducted by the Authority.
Interest	\$89,565	Interest earned from Bank Accounts and Term Deposits
Commercial Training	\$169,787	fees charged for providing fire safety, firefighting, and evacuation drills
Structural Fire Safety	\$373,495	Fees from inspection and certification for Fire Safety Compliance
Discount Received	\$47,423	Discount received on the construction of Waiyevo Fire Station
Private Fire Alarm Rental and Calls	\$143,559	Charges for attending private fire alarm calls
Gain on Sale of ASEs	\$147,346	Revenue earned from sales of Automatic Fire Alarm Signaling Equipment
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,850,829</b>	

**6. The total expenses incurred for the 7 months period ended 31 July 2016 was \$7.8 million which was an increase as compared to the same period in 2015. Can NFA elaborate on the increase of the expenses and how was this addressed?**

The Authority's operations are growing, and services are expanding to areas outside the boundaries and also to the areas where there are no boundaries, hence the operation and maintenance costs are increasing.

Two new Stations were commissioned in 2016 [Korolevu and Korovou] that contributed to the increase in operational costs. [PPEs, Utility Bills, maintaining manning level [manpower] and firefighting appliances and equipment]

**7. Can NFA verify:**

**a. The employee entitlement on leave compensation?**

**b. Why out of the overall expenses it was noted that personal emoluments was very high compared to any other expense (personnel expenses was at 56% and salaries and wages was at 50%)?**

a. All employees are encouraged to take their Annual Leave once they are eligible for it. As per the Authority's Human Resources Policy, no Leave shall be accumulated without the consent of the respective HOD's and encashment of Leave is the sole discretion of the CEO.

b. NFA's main asset is the manpower, hence it is the highest expenditure. It should also be noted on Page 16 of the report, that there has been an increase in number of employee from 355 in 2015 to 394 in 2016

**8. Can NFA provide costing analysis on the assistance rendered for TC Winston during the 7 month period?**

After Cyclone Winston struck, a state of emergency was declared, whereby all state resources were under the jurisdiction of NDMO and Divisional Commissioners. As requested, the Authority directed its resources to areas of need upon directive to carry out cleanups of towns, roads, hospitals, commercial and residential buildings. Unfortunately, no cost of such services was maintained then. However, as from TC Ana and Yasa, the Authority has been maintaining all cost incurred in cleanups which has been forwarded to NDMO. As administrators of the NFA we have to account for all such costs.

**9. Can NFA clarify the increase in the write off value of its assets? NFA to provide a detail breakdown on the cost of each assets that were written off.**

The written down value mentioned refers to the depreciation charge of \$1.3m in 2016 in comparison to the year 2015 which charged \$1.2m. The Authority purchased three fire machines in September & December 2015. The depreciation of the three machines was way less in 2015 which only calculated \$7k for three months when compared to seven months in 2016 at \$118k.

**10. Can NFA elaborate on the increase amount of current assets as of 31 July 2016 (7 Month period) compared to 31 July 2015 (7 month period)?**

The Authority treated Government grant as Cash when it is received. A government grant of \$4.2m for 2016 was received in the month of July which was later utilized in the new period of 2016/2017. The 2015 government grant was received in October 2015 thus it was not recorded as a current asset (cash) in the first 7 months of 2015. Unutilized funds at the period end are treated as current assets in the statement of financial position.



- 11. Can NFA verify on the following current assets as specified in the 7 month period:**
- a. \$2.5 million held to maturity investments?**
  - b. \$3.1 million money owed to NFA?**

- a. The \$2.5 million held to maturity refers to the short-term investments that are with Merchant Finance Ltd and Credit Corporation Ltd as detailed in the table below.

NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY INVESTMENTS ENDING 31/07/16	
Institution	Amount
Merchant Finance	
I15575	261213.15
I15585	261213.15
O15286	263946.35
O15289	281311.17
Credit Corporation	
252669	1021430.03
252751	507085.66
Total Investments	\$ 2,596,199.52

b. The \$3.1 million owed to NFA are detailed in the table below.

Trade and other receivables	Amount
Trade accounts receivable	2,462,998
Less: provision for doubtful debts	(17,512)
	2,445,486
Deposits	24,111
Value Added Tax receivable	835,750
Less: provision for doubtful debts	(312,131)
Staff advances	46,258
Other receivables	67,800
Less: provision for doubtful debts	(1,970)
<b>Total trade and other receivables</b>	<b>\$ 3,105,304</b>

**12. The value of NFA vehicles totaled \$6.2 million as at 31 July 2016. Can NFA provide a breakdown of NFA vehicles in each fire stations for the period under review?**

The Authority recorded a written down value of \$6.2 million in Motor Vehicles and Fire machines on July 31, 2016. Below is the breakdown of the costs. [Total of 68 vehicles]

<b>MOTOR VEHICLE AND FIRE MACHINES</b>	<b>Written Down Value</b>
<b>MOTOR VEHICLE</b>	
<b>SUVA</b>	
1 only Ford Ranger 4x2 twin cab – Duty officer vehicle- FX660	1,594.20
1 only Ford Ranger 4 x 2 twin cab – DFO Central vehicle-FX659	1,594.20
Maxus V80 Ambulance HM055	39,881.31
Maxus V80 Ambulance HM056	39,881.30
Vehicle HZ 740	59,456.92
Nissan Pajero for CEO – IC931	85,252.17
<b>FIRE TENDER – FIRE MACHINES</b>	
<b>SIGATOKA</b>	
FIRE TENDER ISUZU- DQ 978	912.87
FIRE TRUCK ISUZU- DS 502	3,492.69
FIRE TENDER – DQ 978	7,303.03
New Slip-on Mitsubishi Triton GL from Quick Corp – FK973	33,499.33
<b>SEAQAQA</b>	
FIRE TRUCKS ISUZU – DS 503	3,492.69

<b>LEVUKA</b>	
ISUZU FIRE TRUCKS – DS 510	3,492.69
<b>LAUTOKA</b>	
ISUZU FIRE TENDER – DQ 978	1,212.12
ISUZU FIRE TRUCKS – DS 504	4,281.02
<b>LABASA</b>	
ISUZU FIRE TRUCKS – DS 505	3,492.69
<b>SUVA</b>	
FIRE TRUCKS – DU 065	35,654.82
FIRE TRUCKS – DS 450	3,599.80
FIRE TRUCKS – DS 501	3,599.80
FIRE TRUCKS – DS 507	3,599.80
FIRE TRUCKS – DS 509	3,599.80
FIRE TENDER – DQ 979	13,236.74
FIRE TENDER – ED651	87,731.34
FIRE TENDER DONATION	9,407.17
New Fire Truck- FI 408	185,358.17
RESCUE TRUCK – FI483	13,912.18

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG930</b>	18,058.81
3 <sup>rd</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG931	18,058.81
4 <sup>th</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG932	18,058.81
5 <sup>th</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG933	16,153.71
6 <sup>th</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG934	16,153.71
7 <sup>th</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG935	16,153.71
Fire Truck Mazda, 1994 Model from CFA – FM151	,17,212.76
Fire truck FO 828	1,000,504.99
Fire truck FO 826	1,071,067.43
Fire truck FP 401	43,281.29
HD481	41,258.17
HD482	41,258.17
HD483	41,258.17
HD484	41,258.17
HD485	41,258.17
HD486	41,258.16

22m Aerial Pumping Appliance (Fire Truck)- IG061	1,028,609.29
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle MYW653-1987 Hino GT HN046	65,501.25
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle MYW653-1987 Hino GT HN047	65,501.24
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN048	43,120.78
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN049	43,120.78
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN050	43,120.78
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN051	43,120.78
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN057	43,120.78
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN058	43,120.79
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN059	43,120.79
Secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN060	43,120.79
1xscania multipurpose fire appliance HS508	1,243,612.71

Fire Truck – ISUZU FTR TYP – HD487	33,013.80
Fire Truck – HINO GT 4x4-HD482	34,509.59
Fire Truck – HINO GT 4x4-HD483	33,004.52
Fire Truck – HINO GT 4x4-HD485	34,499.88
Fire Truck – HINO GT 4x4-HD486	34,495.03
Fire Truck – ISUZU FSR 4x4-FG931	20,994.02
Fire Truck – ISUZU FSR 198-FG932	20,991.06
Purchase of Fire – ISUZU FTR TYP -FG934	19,440.99
Purchase of Fire Trucks – HINO GT 4X4	19,438.26
Purchase of Fire Trucks – HINO GT 4X4	19,435.53
Purchase of Fire Trucks – HINO GT 4X4	19,432.80
Purchase of Fire Trucks – HINO GT 4X4	19,430.07
Purchase of Fire Trucks – ISUZU FSR 4X	19,427.34
Purchase of Fire Trucks – ISUZU FSR 198	19,424.61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,229,452.33</b>

**13. There were “goods and services not yet paid for” during the 7 month period ended 31 July 2016 as specified in the report. Can NFA provide an update on the collection of the money owed to them?**

The ‘goods and services not yet paid’ refers to trade creditors that the Authority owes monies and the accrued expenses at the balance date. Below is the breakdown of the \$2 million current liability recorded.

Trade and other payables	Amount
Trade creditors	1,387,414
Accruals	673,409
	<b>2,060,823</b>



**14. Can NFA elaborate on the types of training that officers attend in order to respond to emergencies? How effective is this training, were there any shortfalls in officers responding to the different types of emergencies, how did NFA overcome this shortfalls?**

The National Fire Authority has specialized departments [Fire Safety and Compliance Department and Operation Department] that conduct trainings. Commercial Training Department provides Fire Safety and Fire Prevention Training as enacted in the HASAW Act.

NFA Operation Department is conducting training according to the annual training and drill programs provided by the NFA Training Department. Each person should carry out training for 2hrs compulsory on daily basis from Monday to Friday. For internal training, all firefighters must go through promotional training in order to move up to another level.

For external training, some firefighters were given the opportunity to undertake training available abroad through JICA training, Singapore, Jakarta, and Malaysia in terms of firefighting, rescue, hazardous material, natural disaster, community-based training, urban search and rescue, swift water, and flood rescue and other related rescue training like high-rise building training, high angle rescue, low angle rescue. The training level that our current officers attained, was the knowledge being imparted by those who have attended those trainings and those that have been taught on a station basis. Officers also attend the Institutes of Fire Engineers [IFE] through correspondence and have attained preliminary, certificates, and graduate.

One of the shortfalls that we currently have for training is that we do not have a training academy where officers can utilize the facilities available for capacity building and utilize what is available in the training ground. Although our staff is highly trained for all rescue and emergency operations, our machine's capabilities are limited to 8-story buildings.

**15. From the Emergency Incident Responses attended to by NFA as stipulated in the annual report, (i) Fire Response, (ii) Fire Causes, (iii) Road Accident Rescue, (iv) Hazardous Material Rescue, (v) Urban Search and Rescue, (vi) Swift and Flood Water Rescue and (vii) Rescue and Natural Disasters Response, can NFA:**

- a. Elaborate on the challenges faced when attending to emergencies mentioned above and how was this addressed?**
- b. Discuss further on Training and Development of officers in attending to the different types of emergencies?**
- c. Further elaborate on the challenges and the way forward on the spillage at Wailotua and co-ordination of evacuation with NDMO in responding to natural disasters?**

- a. The most common challenges that we faced are Late notification to NFA, Emergency Calls during peak times [Road congestion], Road accessibility, Distance from stations, nonavailability of a dedicated NFA Emergency line, and lack of Fire Hydrants and Specialized rescue Equipment and Machinery.
  - Establishment of 910 dedicated toll-free line for fire and emergency rescues
  - Prior to 2016 there were only 14 Fire Station, and 2 new Fire Stations [Korolevu and Korovou] were commissioned in 2016.
  - NFA had procured portable water pumps for drafting water from surrounding water sources

b. As discussed in Q14, Officers are sent overseas to do courses related to Firefighting and Rescue and First Responders for Ambulance services. We have standard operating procedures which can assist officers in responding to emergencies and are used to clarify some of the issues found to be lacking, in any emergency responses.

c. The biggest challenges we faced in the Wailotua Chemical Spill are as follows:

1. The Authority's powers on Hazardous Material is limited only to its storage and not to its mode of transportation.

**Way Forward** - The transportation of Hazardous Material must comply with Land Transport Authority requirements. The driver and the transportation of goods should have the required permits

- The impact of the leakage could have been catastrophic that could affect the environment and the livelihood of neighboring villages, humans, and livestock

2. Timely notification to those who would be potentially affected by the spill/incident

**Way Forward** – The highest level of compliance is warranted as stated in 1 above as the Authority will not condone the reoccurrence of such incident because of its high risk as stated above

**16. Can NFA elaborate on the reasons for the highest number of Fire Cases for the period under review (i.e. structural fires, electrical related fires and fire related incidents)?**

**Structural Fires** –Electrical remains the highest cause of Structural fires from 2016 to date with an annual average of 33% of all fire causes tabulated. 90 to 95% of structural fires occur in residential homes and 5 to 10 % occur in industrial buildings. The figures from the table depicts the different levels of fire safety compliance to National Building Codes in these 2 sectors.

NFA at the moment only inspects and certifies the industrial and commercial properties for fire safety compliances. These compliance levels are based on the National Building Codes, the Health and Safety at Work [HASAW] Act and the National Fire Service [NFS]Act

NFA in accordance with the National Building Code, vets and approves all industrial and commercial building plans prior to construction to ensure compliancy. On the other hand even though NFA is also empowered by the NFS Act to inspect and certify residential premises, we are yet to implement the same as there needs to be a collaborative approach between approving agencies.

**17. Due to the electrical fires being the highest number (30%) for causes of fire, how is NFA working with stakeholders to address the highest number of electrical fires and other causes of fire?**

Recently NFA was fully engaged in the review of the National Building Code which addressed the shortfalls in the Code in terms of **Electrical Section E**. The Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Meteorological Services is the leading stakeholder in the review of the National Building Code and has completed the consultation process. The new building code redefines ways to protect residential homes and has included compulsory compliance to improve fire safety and reduce unwanted fires.

## **18. Can NFA elaborate on fire safety initiatives for commercial and residential properties?**

Under Section 11A (2) of the NFS Act we are empowered to inspect and certify all commercial and residential buildings. In saying this we are strengthening our fire safety compliance roles for all commercial, industrial, and residential buildings. We have trained and certified 32 Firefighters to be dedicated Structural Fire Safety Inspectors responsible for the inspection of these buildings to ensure that fire safety standards are adhered to.

As earlier alluded to in 17 above, the revised Building Code captures the safety requirement standards of residential buildings. In the meantime, the Authority is rolling out an Integrated Community Fire Wardens Framework in the various communities in Fiji. This framework is a new initiative to prevent the occurrence of unwanted fires and other emergencies by engaging in partnerships with communities.

Under this framework, the Authority carries out 2 weeks of intensive training to enable them to conduct fire safety checks within their communities. They are taught basic life support, fire evacuation drills, smokehouse awareness, swift water rescue, first aid training, fire safety at home, fire warden, fire team training

**19. Elaborate on how was the Ambulance Response Service during the period under review? Due to the number of calls received identify the areas of where the assistance were rendered?**

During the period under review, NFA had 7 ambulances operating in Suva, Valelevu, Nausori, Sigatoka, Ba, Rakiraki, and Labasa Fire Stations. Under the NFS Act, NFA is mandated to operate within the fire boundaries, but due to the criticalness of the services required by communities, we have rendered the services far and beyond our legislated fire service boundaries.

Our ambulance services' immediate priority is to attend to fire calls and road accidents, however, due to the 24/7 work shift, it was seen fit to look after the general public.

**20. Elaborate as to why the implementation of the Fire Security curriculum was only limited to early childhood education, year 1 and 2?**

Since the establishment of NFA in 1995, we have been carrying out fire safety awareness in Fiji. The outcomes of this program identified that children adapt well to our fire safety messages compared to adults.

A practical example of this was in a fire scene in 2006, where a little girl about 8 to 10 years of age had saved her 80-year-old grandparent from a fire in their home in Flagstaff. The little girl was taught by our Fire Safety Trainers to crawl for safety if she was trapped in the house during a fire. With these learnings, she had woken her granddad and told him to follow her by crawling for safety because of the smoke and heat in the burning house. She managed to save her granddad, and this is when the Authority decided to train fire evacuation drills at an early stage due to this little girl's success story.

With the assistance of the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Unit and UNICEF, NFA was able to develop student workbooks and a teacher's guide for the teaching of fire safety as part of the Health Science Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, Year 1, Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6. These workbooks were developed and launched in 2013 and 2014.

Early in January this year, our Senior Management Team comprising of the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Fire Officer, Manager Fire Safety and Compliance, and Manager Legal met with the Acting Permanent Secretary for Education to discuss further including Fire Safety Education in the Secondary School Curriculum. Additionally we also discussed the opportunity to include Fire Safety as a core unit at the university level following that OHS is now a compulsory unit



**21. Considering Taveuni as a volunteer-based station, has NFA upgraded this to a permanent station due to its geographical location?**

The station has been upgraded to the permanent station on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017 which is now manned by 21 fully qualified firefighters. |



## **22. Have NFA procured upgraded Fleet to cater for high story buildings?**

Yes, on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015, 2 x 28 meters boom hydraulic ladder trucks were purchased from the UK, and they are still in the NFA Fleet as of today. These are very precise and expensive ladder trucks

**23. What are the challenges on the enforcement of fire safety compliance in new developments to include fire risk mitigating infrastructure and equipment and installation of fire hydrant as part of any new development project cost?**

Section 11A of the NFS Act empowers the NFA's Fire Safety and Compliance Department to vet and approve new subdivisions and new commercial and residential building plans. In the new subdivision plans the Safety and Compliance Department ensures that Fire Hydrants are appropriately and strategically positioned for ease of access to Fire Machines. The challenges in this area are:

- Developers place height restrictions for vehicle access – Access from Vishnu Deo Road to the subdivision behind Rup's Mega Complex, Height restrictions to Lees Complex in Ratu Dovi Road
- Preference for one-way traffic over 2 lanes
- Poor Traffic Impact Assessment Plan - Flagstaff Complex, Nakasi Shopping Complex

For industrial and commercial buildings, the Fire and Safety Compliance Department is empowered to vet, approve and monitor all buildings for compliance with Fire Safety in accordance with the National Building Codes.

**Challenges:**

- Designers lack knowledge of the National Building Codes
- Building plans designed by foreign architects and written in their own language
- Developers' evasive tactics to avoid compliance with Fire Safety Standards to lower project costs
- Fire Safety Building Inspectors are denied access by Building owners to conduct inspections.

**24. During the period under review new fire hydrants were purchased but NFA was continuously challenged by the inability of Water Authority of Fiji to adequately mobilize teams to the installation of these fire hydrants, what did NFA do to address this issue?**

There were issues of delayed installations, but this was resolved through meetings and all fire hydrants have been successfully installed around the country. NFA and WAF continue to engage and discuss areas of interest.

**25. It was noted that there were hydrants that were inspected during the period and defect hydrants have been reported to Water Authority of Fiji for repair. Can NFA provide statistics on the 2,870 hydrants on how many were in good working condition and how many were defective? How did NFA address the issue of defective hydrants?**

These are historical data. All the defective fire hydrants had been repaired upon referrals to WAF.

**26. Can NFA provide a breakdown of the commercial training that was conducted? NFA to provide details of men and women participants, age category, division and employment sector.**

Tabulated below is the breakdown of the training conducted for the period in review. |

Training Courses	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	Total
Fire Evacuation Drill	13	9	7	2	8	30	11	80
Fire Evacuation Training	0	0	3	0	0	4	4	11
Fire Safety at Work	4	3	10	3	0	3	2	25
Fire Warden Training	22	14	4	10	19	27	22	118
Fire Team Training	3	3	0	7	9	2	15	39
Confine Space training	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>273</b>

PARTICIPATION BY DIVISION AND GENDER		
Gender	DIVISION	Total
Female	CENTRAL	163
	NORTHERN	24
	WESTERN	117
	<b>Female Total</b>	<b>304</b>
Male	CENTRAL	313
	NORTHERN	64
	WESTERN	384
	<b>Male Total</b>	<b>761</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1065</b>

**27. NFA responded to a total of 542 Private Fire Alarm (PFA) calls, from these calls how many were found faulty and what has NFA done to address this faulty lines?**

For the period ending 31 December, a total number of 2,884 fire calls were attended and the details are tabulated below:

Type of Response	31 December 2016
1. Structural Fires (K99)	81
2. Small Fires (K88)	120
3. Rubbish/Bush/Cane Fires	464
4. Vehicle Fire	40
5. Ship & Boat Fire	1
6. Road Accident Rescue (RAR)	116
7. Ambo Calls	1392
8. Special Services	86
9. Swift Water Rescue	-
10. PFA Calls	542
11. Malicious Calls	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,884</b>

Of the total calls, 542 were received through Alarm Signaling Equipment. The 542 calls received were all genuine and were automatically transmitted to the Authority's Control Room [now known as National Command Center] through the Alarm Signaling Equipment [ASE] which is linked to the fire panel in the building. As soon as the detectors in the building detect any smoke or heat, it triggers and transmits to National Command Center with the building name and location whereby the response team is dispatched.

The response team carries out a thorough search of the building and determines whether there is an actual cause or a false alarm. If there is no fire, it is classified as a false alarm and the building owner is penalized with a prescribed fee to recover the cost of the run.

In 2016 a total of 210 properties were monitored by the NFA's fire monitoring system of which 5 units were found to be faulty. The property owners were advised, and the units were replaced with new ones.

NFA, through the Structural Fire Safety and Compliance (SFSC) Department, conducts annual building inspections which include verifying that private fire alarm systems are maintained regularly. Failure to maintain their private fire alarm system will result in non-compliance and NFA's Compliance Certificate will be withheld. It is the responsibility of the building owners to maintain and service their private fire alarm systems.

**28. How many commercials and advertisement were carried out during the period under review? Did NFA carry out an analysis to know the effectiveness of the adverts and commercials to its readers and viewers?**

The NFA released the following fire safety commercials and advertisements during the 7-month period:

- A total of 44 media statements from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016.
- A total of 675 spots including bonus spots on Fiji TV, Sky TV, FBC TV, and 750 spots on Communications Fiji Limited, featuring 30-sec commercials on fire safety tips featured for six months from January to June 2016.
- Fire safety tips featured every Friday on the Fiji Sun's "It's Friday" column from January to June 2016.

The mass media is an effective mode for dissemination of awareness messages, but it is also a very costly mode. NFA also conducts community fire safety awareness programs through its 18 Fire Stations around the country, and for the 7 month-period, NFA delivered a total of 1,203 programs involving House to House visitations, Community Awareness programs, and School visits, reaching a total population of 67,857.

Whilst great effort has been made towards reaching as great an audience as possible, the effectiveness of these fire safety messages is measured against the number of structural fires that occurred during the period. The total number of structural fires for the 7 months period to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016 was 81 compared to 63 for the same period in 2015, a 28% increase, confirming that more concerted efforts should be engaged with stakeholders for assistance with fire safety awareness campaigns in order to change people's attitudes towards fire safety.



**29. How was NFAs engagement with social media platforms during the period under review? Elaborate on the challenges and the way forward in undertaking this type of engagement?**

NFA's social media platforms were Facebook and Twitter whereby the Media Officer posts NFA's official media releases to all media and including NFA's FB and Twitter pages. The information released has the prior approval of the CEO and is only focused on fire incidents and fire safety messages that people need to be aware off to avoid the occurrence of unwanted fires.

These portals were used purely for information dissemination and focused on the number of people viewing the information released on these pages. These pages have been favorably received by the public. For 2022/2023, NFA's social media pages were discontinued due to system virus intrusions and NFA is revisiting these platforms for continuation as fire safety information dissemination portals.

**30. NFA during the 7 month period was operating without a full NFA Board membership and a substantive Chief Executive Officer, what were the challenges faced by Management and staff?**

The challenges faced during the 7-month period without a full Board and a substantive CEO were more related to corporate governance matters such as:

- delay in the appointment of the full Board also delayed the appointment of a new CEO.
- delay in the appointment of a substantive CEO which required the full Board's endorsement before Ministerial approval.
- delay in the commencement of new Government-funded projects such as the new Rakiraki Fire Station and the new Nabouwalu Fire Station which required the CEO and the Board's approvals for the engagement of civil works and construction works contractors.
- delay in other capital projects such as procurement of vehicles, equipment, and other infrastructural improvements due to the absence of a CEO and full Board.
- whilst day-to-day administration of the Authority were addressed through the Authority's existing policies and procedures, administered by the NFA Board Chairman (who was the only Board member whose term was renewed), Management had to maintain all documentations daily for endorsement and ratification by the NFA Board in due course.

**31. What was the reason for these 16 community volunteers not paid any allowances or wages, how did NFA managed to sustain these volunteers?**

These volunteers were youths and members of the community in villages near Stations who came in as community-based volunteers under the recommendations of the Station Officer. They were not paid any allowances but purely volunteered their time to learn basic firefighting skills. They had to attend 2 hours of drills a week to learn the basics of firefighting skills.

**32. Can NFA elaborate on the two (2) basis of qualified opinion that was stated in the Auditor's Report? How did NFA ensure that this was not a recurring issue?**

The Authority has been carrying out annual inventory stock takes and BOS of Assets, however, there had been an oversight on the part of the Authority to invite the Office of the Auditor General to be part of the team to carry out the Annual inventory stock take and BOS of Asset. Following the 2015 audit, the Authority is now engaging the Office of the Auditor General to be part of the team commencing from 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019.

### 33. Can NFA elaborate on its contribution to SDG performance targets? What were the challenges?

NFA has incorporated the 5 years and 20 years National Development Plans and Sustainable Development Goals into its Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and implemented through the development of its annual Costed Operational Plans, with specific targets, timelines, and responsibilities to ensure progress towards the achievement of these plans and the achievement of the Authority's *Vision* for the next 5 years: *Resilient communities with effective Emergency Services*.

Whilst the Government, through the Ministry of Housing, has established a relief package of \$5,000 for the recovery of all fire victims who lost their homes in a fire, NFA assists by providing the fire victims with the necessary forms to complete and submit to the Ministry for processing.

The Authority has also implemented its NFA Command Centre and Computer Aided Dispatch System which receives and digitizes all 910 fire emergency calls, enhancing the Authority's response, efficiency, and effectiveness of its service delivery to the communities for the early mitigation of the impact of fires.

The Authority has also identified new initiatives in its Strategic Plan and annual Costed Operational Plans to design and implement measures to localize and realize the Sustainable Development Goals through the:

- implementation of the framework for an integrated community approach that involves the Authority working with Communities on the concept of training and certifying selected Community Fire Wardens for the prevention or early mitigation of home fires in their communities.
- the Authority's key role in the current review of the Fiji National Building Code for strengthening fire safety aspects of the Code to enhance fire safety compliance in all building structures in Fiji.
- development of Fiji Fire Service Standards as a supplementary document to Fiji's National Building Code to regulate and strengthen all fire-related issues in Fiji.
- The introduction of ISO standards in the Authority is also expected to raise the standard of service provided by the Authority.

Some measures that require good coordination for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals should include:

- development of a policy framework to support fire safety compliance for all structures,
- provide incentives for donor agencies to support fire safety awareness,
- border control of all substandard electrical items and firefighting equipment,
- devise an effective mode for knowledge transfer so that the public can quickly learn from others' experiences and prevent fires.

### **34. Can NFA highlight its contribution towards SDG 5 – Gender Equality and its implementation in the work carried out by the organization?**

NFA's contribution towards SDG 5 has been in the inclusion of females into the predominantly male career firefighter profession. This inclusivity approach commenced in 2006 with the recruitment of its first female firefighter. However, infrastructural improvements were also a key component that needed to be expedited such as Fire Stations having to include female facilities in relation to dormitories and conveniences. Whilst the recruit selection criteria are consistent for both genders, the required fitness levels differ due to their physical structure and competency.

Government funding assistance provided in 2009 enabled NFA to commence the upgrade of its fire station facilities to include female facilities, starting with the new Nadi Fire Station in 2010 with further funding assistance from Government, NFA was also able to establish modern Fire Station facilities in Korolevu, Korovou, Rakiraki, Seaqaqa, Savusavu, Taveuni, Nakasi, Lami and Nabouwalu. With the inclusion of female facilities in these new fire stations, NFA has been able to progress the inclusion of more females into the firefighting profession. As of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016, NFA had a total of 6 female firefighters, compared to 7 in 2015.

NFA will continue to recruit female firefighters.



**Vinaka Vakalevu**

# Appendix 2

## Verbatim Report



# **[VERBATIM REPORT]**

## **MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

**National Fire Authority 2016 Annual Report**

**INSTITUTION: National Fire Authority [NFA]**

**VENUE: Big Committee Room (East Wing)**

**DATE: Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2023**



**VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD AT THE SMALL COMMITTEE ROOM (WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON THURSDAY, 8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2023, AT 11.00 A.M.**

**Interviewee/Submittee:      National Fire Authority**

**In Attendance:**

- |    |                       |   |  |
|----|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1. | Mr. Puamau Sowane     | - | Executive Officer                              |
| 2. | Mr. Qionilau Moceitai | - | Chief Fire Officer                             |
| 3. | Mr. Esala Radeu       | - | Manager Legal                                  |
| 4. | Mr. Sen Jeet          | - | Manager Finance                                |
| 5. | Mr. Joel Israel       | - | Manager Fire Safety, Compliance and Properties |
- 

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, members of the media and the public, the Secretariat, viewers, ladies and gentlemen; a very good morning to you all and it is my absolute pleasure to welcome everyone this morning, especially the viewers who are watching this session.

I am privileged to Chair this meeting of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, which is being aired live on the Parliament Channel through the Walesi platform and livestreamed through Parliament's *Facebook* page.

For information purpose, pursuant to Parliament Standing Order 111, it mandates that all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, this meeting is open to the public and the media and will also be aired live, as I had mentioned earlier.

However, for any sensitive information regarding this submission that cannot be disclosed in public, it can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing. But, please, do note that this will only be allowed for a few specific circumstances, namely:

1. National security matters;
2. Third party confidential information;
3. Personal or human resources matters; and
4. Meetings where the Committee deliberates on all issues before it develops its recommendations and reports.

I wish to remind honourable Members and our invited submittees that all comments and questions asked are to be addressed through the Chairperson. Also be mindful that only the invited submittees will be allowed to ask any questions or give comments to the Committee. This is a parliamentary meeting and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and the Standing Orders of Parliament. Please, note that the Committee does not condone liable, slander or any allegations against any individual that is not present today to defend themselves.

In terms of other protocols, please, be advised that whilst the meeting is in progress, movement within the room will be restricted. Therefore, there should be minimal use of mobile phones, whereby answering of phones should be done outside this room, and all mobile phones are to be on silent mode.

Without further ado, I will now ask the honourable Members of the Standing Committee to introduce themselves.

[Introduction of Committee Members]

Honourable Members, with us this morning are representatives from the National Fire Authority (NFA), who have been requested to provide a submission on their 2016 Annual Report.

The Committee, in its deliberation, have formulated questions which were sent to NFA and it is required that they provide and present on their responses today. This will then assist the Committee in formulating its recommendations in its Committee Report, which will then be tabled to Parliament.

Having said that, I now invite our guests to introduce themselves. Before we proceed with your submission, please, note that if there are any questions from honourable Members of the Committee, that will take place after the presentation. I now give you the floor, Sir.

MR. P. SOWANE.- Madam Chairperson, thank you and good morning to honourable Kiran and honourable Vanawalu, and also to the Secretariat. A very good morning to you all. My name is Puamau Sowane, I am the Chief Executive Officer of the National Fire Authority. I am from Tubou, Lakeba in Lau and I will also allow the Senior Executives of NFA to also introduce themselves.

[Introduction of National Fire Authority Officials]

MR. P. SOWANE.- Madam Chairperson we will go straight into the presentation. Is there a time allocated for this meeting? Is there a time limitation for this presentation?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Sir, one hour, but you may go beyond if you wish to present on all of the responses that you have provided for us today.

MR. P. SOWANE.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The reason I ask is because we received 32 questions and this is the first time for NFA to receive such a number of questions to go through, but we also welcome the initiative.

We thought of just taking honourable Members through the broad vision of the NFA, and you can see that the broad vision is based on a 5-Year Strategic Development Plan. Within these five years, we are expecting that members of the community should be a resilient community and we also have some, sort of, effective emergency services. When I am talking about resilient community, I meant communities that are well educated in terms of fire safety.

There we have our mission. Basically, our objective is to preserve life, property and environment, as well as community education, disaster, emergency risk reduction and also carry out an efficient and quality service.

To be able to achieve our vision, we thought that we put in place value for our people and, that is, we have a sense of providing service at very high standard and to be very excellent in terms of our deliveries.

We must have discipline in our force and also their loyalty towards their commitment. They must have teamwork and we also allow them to be innovative in their own ways.

The motto for NFA is to be always ready if you are to carry out an efficient service and delivery to the members of the public.

The next slide goes on to show the organisation structure of NFA. So, for the NFA, we are aligned to the Minister for Local Government and Housing. We have the NFA Board and the Chief Executive Officer. Underneath the Chief Fire Officer, unlike the CEO, we have a very flat structure there because of the quicker response in terms of communication. We have the Chief Fire Officer, who is on my right here, who is heading the operation which means that all the firefighters report to him. He has his own Deputy and in the Division, there are three Divisional Fire Officers that head the three Divisions in the Central, Western and Northern Division.

When I am saying this, I mean that the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer, the Divisional Fire Officers, the STOs and the top echelons of the NFA, their duties, roles and responsibilities are all enacted under the National Fire Service Act 1994.

Besides that, we also have a Manager Fire Safety who is sitting right here and is the one who is responsible for looking after the compliance rate within the community, in the commercial, industrial and also in the residential. Unfortunately, our Manager ICT could not join us today.

This is a new role - the Manager Risk and Audit. The ones in orange are the new positions that we have created because of the vast responsibility that has now come together to NFA. We have a Manager Risk and Audit, who is unable to join us this morning; the Manager Finance, Mr. Sen Jeet, who looks after all the finance; the Manager Legal, who looks after our legal matters and also looking at the revision of our National Fire Service Act 1994 which was enacted in 1995.

We have a Manager Fleet who looks after all our fleet and our Manager Human Resources, as you can see in this slide there, we have separated the two - our Manager Human Resources and Manager Corporate Affairs. At this point in time, only one person is holding onto both but we are proposing to separate these two positions because the Manager Corporate is also a very critical position that runs by its own. We also have a Manager Training and Standard, that is yet to be filled.

Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, since the establishment of NFA since 1995, NFA has evolved in so many forms in terms of the service that we deliver and also the number and size has also increased in the last 28 years.

The next slide basically shows NFA's core roles. We also have the fire rescue. We also have high angle rescue in terms of high-rise building and also the hazardous material. Hazardous material rescue was an incident in Wailotua where our people were called to try and contain the cyanide spillage.

We also have the expertise of road accident rescue. We do urban search and rescue and when I am talking about urban search and rescue, this is in regards to search when there is collapse of a high-rise building and there are people who are buried under it. That is the time when our people come in and do the search and rescue. They have the knowledge of how to go about it. We also do flood water rescue, natural disaster rescue, community education and emergency ambulance services.

Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, I think you know the core role here as we go into the question that was given to us. Most of it we will elaborate into some of the things that I have not explained.

The next slide, Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, is what we term as the NFA Strategic House. It houses everything that is about the corporate goals of NFA. So, if you look at it, it is in the form of a house, the roof-like structure will start from the house of NFA, the foundation of this is our value that we have already explained, and the house consists of five very strong pillars and the beams that holds them together is our vision and our mission and it is all housed under the NFA.

Madam Chairperson, I am not going to go into minor details but just to say that strategic goal one or pillar number one, you can see, is safety prevention. This pillar - safety prevention, has allowed NFA to put together various activities to shift our focus from reactive to proactive firefighting. So, when I am talking about proactive firefighting, I am talking about awareness, I am talking about activities that will improve the community education, the community engagement in compliance with the building codes and of the likes, as well as enhancing synergy across multisector agency to foster community resilience.

The outcome of this pillar is reduction of the likelihood of unwanted fires, increased preparedness of fire emergency services and also strengthen our mechanism to improve building safety and protections of critical facilities, good alignment of goals to Government policies and also improve the level of safety.

The second pillar on SDG 2, we have exceptional fire emergency services. This pillar is basically to enhance our service mode, to improve our response time to the various emergency services that we do look after. Also, the outcome of that is the improved quality of our response time to fires and all emergencies, and improve readiness for emergencies, et cetera.

Pillar number three is the sustainability of NFA. You can see, if you look at the house, we strategically put this pillar right at the middle of the house because this pillar holds the equilibrium between all the things that we carry out at NFA. When I am talking about sustainability, I am also talking about finance, so we have to be financially sustainable. We are also looking at our existence or presence in the community in terms of spreading out our services in all our fire stations.

You can see, Madam Chairperson, that in the past few years, we have spread out our service area towards the rural areas in terms of constructing new fire stations, the latest one is in Nabouwalu. We also have the one in Lami and there is one in Nakasi. Those are the new stations that we have just constructed. We have a fire station in Seaqaqa.

We have also acquired pieces of land in some of the interior land like Keiyasi because in Keiyasi, under the 20-Year Government plan, Keiyasi was supposed to be a township of itself and for Keiyasi to be able to be called a town, all facilities have to be there. So, we have already acquired a piece of land in Keiyasi in readiness for that.

That is also probably the broad vision of the Strategic Government Plan, to make Keiyasi a township of its own and to prevent people from coming down to Sigatoka Town. We have seen that we had attended to a fire right up at Keiyasi, coming from Sigatoka Town, which is very, very far. And to drive our big vehicle right from Sigatoka Town to Keiyasi is a big task and by the time we reach Keiyasi, everything is already down to ashes. So, that is one of the reason why we have procured a piece of land from there because there is a Government Station that is already there and we have to respond to that. So, that is the sustainability of the NFA.

Goal No. 4 talks about the people strategy on how we intend to build capacity within our people. There is a range of trainings and workshops that we do send our people to. When we talk about

people strategy, we also look into the welfare and wellness of our people. We have a programme in place whereby on every Wednesday, we put them across. We also do screen checks for our people just to ensure that they are healthy and also advise them on healthy activities to carry out to improve on their health.

The last of it is the new one which is the NFA transformation. You will see the NFA transformation is how we intend to transform NFA since the birth of NFA in 1994, the new establishment of NFA in 1995 and 27 years later where this pillar intends to propel NFA to the next level.

There had been several activities that we conducted since 1995 until 2021, and we intend to move NFA to the next level. So, to do that, we intend to become an internationally recognised organisation and, that is, to strictly operate under the Quality Management Principle based on international best practices. When I am saying this, I also want to let honourable Members know that NFA is already into the various steps of being certified as one of the ISO certified organisations in Fiji.

The Fiji National University is with us in this right now at this point in time. We have about 14 steps to achieve before we invite our external auditor to come and audit NFA, but right now our internal auditor is here. We are at the stage of identifying the gaps that are out there in our systems and our operational schedules, all these things we are trying to put together, before we move to the next step.

The next slide, Madam Chairperson, is about an analysis of structural fire for the last seven years. You can see that the year in review was 2016. We started from 2015 to 2022, so we put across to you the fire trend in the last seven years.

You can see that right on top is the red line and that is the number of structural fires that occurred in the last seven years. You can see the trend, and when it hits 2021, that is when our 5-Year Strategic Plan for NFA was signed. We started to implement functions of the 2021-2026 Plan. You can see that the trend has gone down, and that is the idea of trending of this. When you look at the declining trend, even though it is only showing the fire incident within the eighth months, but that is the idea of trending. When we are trying to implement our strategic plan, this is exactly what we want.

The outcome of this strategic plan is to zeroize the number of structural fires in Fiji. We are trying our very best to, at least, come closer to the standard of New Zealand and Australia where there is no structural fire. There is only a few, I think the last structural fire in New Zealand was just a few weeks away but that was also a catastrophic fire which there was a sad loss of five lives and that is where we do not want to reach.

We can see in this graph, the blue one is the residential areas and the yellow one is industrial and commercial buildings - structural fires in commercial buildings. You can see here, Madam Chairperson, that the number of structural fires at residential places from 2015 to 2022 remains the highest and the lowest is always commercial industrial buildings. The reason being is, right now at this point in time, NFA is concentrating in advising commercial and industrial building owners to strictly monitor their fire and building compliance. We issue them with Certificate of Fire Compliance for them to operate, so without our of Fire Compliance Certificate, they would not be able to operate. So, the lose end is at residential, and that is very critical to us.

What is our way forward to save our community, in terms of saving them from the drastic impact of fires in residential areas? We do carry out awareness in our community but like every other years, when our firefighters move away from that, everything is being forgotten.

The next slide, Madam Chairperson, is an analysis of the estimated loss due to fire damage. You can see in the last seven years that we have analysed, the total average of structural fire was 140 per year. As you go down, the number of deaths, you can see that the highest death was 18 in 2017, which was probably inclusive of the bus accident in Cuvu - the bus that caught fire in 2017.

You can see in the last seven years, we have a total of 62 deaths due to house fires - an average of eight. The average cost per year is about \$17 million loss of structural damage, and the total cost for that is \$130.9 million. The total cost to NFA, that is, our operational cost for the last seven years is \$1.8 million - an average loss of about \$232,000 per year. That is the cost incurred to NFA for firefighting.

The next slide is basically how we have spread out our service coverage. Since 2015, we only have 16 fire stations and in 2016, we have gone up to 18. This is the inclusion of Korolevu and Korovou which were commissioned in 2016. There is a question asked, why is the emolument higher than this? You can see the trend of our human resource. Actually, with additional two fire stations in 2016, we have to do new recruitment to cater for these two new stations.

In 2017, according to this one, it remained at 18. In 2020, there was two additional fire stations which is in Nakasi and Lami, which makes it 20. The last new station was in 2021 when we commissioned the new station at Nabouwalu. At this point in time, we have a total of 21 fire stations across the country.

Human resource, as of 2022, we have about 595. But as of today, we have about 621 (human resources) and out of this 621, 95 percent are firefighters and only 5 percent are corporate services staff.

The next slide is just the overview of our fleet. From 2015 to 2022, we have a total of 72 and as of 2022, we have 86 and with an additional of two new ambulances that were just commissioned this year, that brings it up to about 88 - total fleet.

You can see our efficiency in terms of our fleet efficiency. We have 70.3 percent efficiency over the years, which means that on an annual basis, we will probably have 70 percent of our total fleet which is operational and 30 percent of the fleet are always in the garage which is quite a high number and that is due to its age.

The following slides, Madam Chairperson, I am not going to go through them in detail because they basically show some of the activities that we are currently doing in terms of the five strategic goals. But some of the things that I need to highlight in the strategic goals and that we are strengthening is the inspection of all our businesses for fire safety compliance and implementation of a Community Fire Warden Programme.

You have seen in the fire trend that I have shown you, the high percentage of fire incidents in residential areas and this is the framework that we have put in place to try and address that. This framework actually has everything that has to be done for our people to train the community and make them firefighters of their own community. It depends on the number of houses in that community, so the community themselves will appoint their fire wardens, they bring them to us, and we will train them on how to fight fires and how to inspect their homes to be fire-compliant.



Right now as I speak, we have 1,193 communities, villages, and settlements in Fiji to roll this programme out. From its inception, we have only managed to roll out to 30 communities in Fiji where we have already trained and certified their community fire wardens, including the Bau Island.

The second one is the sustainability of NFA as I have already talked about Strategic Goal No. 4 on People Strategy, these are some of the things that we are doing.

Goal No. 5 on transformation, perhaps some of the things that I just need to highlight here is the one that we have already developed - the National Fire Safety Standard for Inspection on Residential Premises. The establishment of a new NFA Headquarters and a new Fire Academy, that is something that we are working on. The other bulletpoint is the application of Fire Service Levy on insured vehicles. This is something that we are yet to implement to increase our revenue and to pursue ISO 9001-2015 on QMS Certification.

We also have some strategies to improve our revenue. One, is the extension of fire boundaries and the explanation is there. The potential increases in our revenue in terms of water meters sitting outside the existing fire boundary. When we extend it, we will increase water levy remittance to NFA. Also, some of the hotels that are sitting outside the current existing boundary and are not paying bill to NFA, so extending it will now allow them to remit FSL to NFA.

The reason why we want to extend this fire boundary is because of our capability that is there. There is only three criteria that we have to meet to satisfy our Minister: one, is our ability to serve outside the community - outside the fire boundary; the need by the community and that is the willingness of the community to assist NFA. We have met those criteria.

In addition to that, Madam Chairperson, as you can see from 2015 to 2022, the one that we are reviewing, you can see that 48 percent of the fires that we attend to are outside the fire boundary. That is the reason why we are pushing to extend our boundary because the economic zone has expanded since the establishment. Since 1995, the fire boundary was established and until now, we are still working within that very small boundary but, in fact, the economic zone has really extended from that. So, that is the reason why we are trying to extend it.

At this point in time, Madam Chairperson, I will now hand over to our Manager Finance to go into the questions that have been put forward for us in terms of finance. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

MR. S. JEET.- Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, I will take you through the Questions and Answers.

**Question No. 1**

**Can NFA elaborate with a breakdown on the revenue of \$8.1 million collected for the seven months period ended 31st July 2016 as compared to \$7.4 million for the same period in 2015?**

Listed below is the breakdown of the \$8.1 million. The next slide states the components of income and the explanations of what this income consists:

- Amortisation of deferred revenue: Previously, Government Grants used to be accounted as revenue but according to Accounting Standards, it is required that all Capital Grants be referred as liability or deferred revenue. Over the period, as it is dispensed of, that is, amortised as revenue.

- **Fire Levy contribution:** A levy of 0.06 percent is charged on the sum insured on properties for peril of fire. This is collected through insurance companies and brokers and it is submitted to NFA. If a property is valued at \$1 million for peril of fire, fire component is there, then 0.06 percent of it is remitted to NFA.
- **Fire Levy Penalties:** Insurance companies are required to remit to NFA whatever fire service levy they collect within 21 days of the following month. For example, if a Fire Policy is written in June, then by July 21<sup>st</sup>, they must remit all the Fire Service Levy which is 0.06 percent of the sum insured. Should they fail, there is a fixed penalty of \$2,000 and \$200 per day until they pay it off.
- **Ambulance Grant:** Government provides an annual Operating Grant for the ambulance services. This is to pay for the salaries, operation and maintenance and supplies of the ambulance, including maintenance of the vehicles and upgrade and replenishment of the ambulances. Whatever revenue is collected is returned to the Ministry of Finance.
- **Ambulance Income:** This is the income generated when the ambulance is hired, either by the Ministry of Health, or the general public. In fact, this ambulance service is supposed to be for our emergency rescue, for example, attending to road accidents and fires, but we also provide ambulance service to the public and to the Ministry of Health.

The Ministry of Health transports its patients from one hospital to another and for the general public, when there is a need for ambulance service because our men are out there 24/7 and we have 21 stations that are easily accessible.

- **Doubtful Debts recovered:** There were some debts owed to NFA, they were classified as doubtful but we managed to recover those debts. How do we manage to recover those debts?

Any organisation that owes money to NFA and requests services from NFA, they are required to, first, clear their debts that they owe us and make upfront payment for the service they require. In that manner, we are able to recoup our debts.

- **Private Fire Alarms:** These are alarm signal units which are installed to fire panels in buildings. These are annual rental fees which, when NFA sells these units to customers, there is an annual fee which is for monitoring and servicing. It operates on a telemetric system so it is for those services.
- **Structural Fire Safety:** These are the fees charged for of buildings for fire safety compliance, building plan vetting, subdivision plan vetting, liquor licences, fireworks licences, fire reports and commercial trainings, for example, fire evacuation drills on all these contractors, this is that the revenue received and classified therein.
- **Special Services:** These are the fees charged, for example, if someone's pet is trapped somewhere, our people are called to rescue the pet; supply of emergency water; cleaning of towns and cities during natural disasters - post-disaster; and cleaning of swimming pools (we also charge this service).

- Water Levy contributions: This is a 50 cents a month charged on every meter and according to WAF demarcations, it is a quarterly charge of \$1.50 and a monthly charge of 50 cents. So WAF collects those monies and remits to NFA.
- Other Income: This comprises bank interests, donations, administration fees for payroll source deductions, et cetera, monthly rentals for towers and reinvestment interests.

### **Question No. 2**

**It was noted that there was a slight decrease in the income from Structural Fire Safety Compliance fees. This is due to the change in Government Policy for the exemption of SMEs from paying inspection fees.**

- (a) **NFA identify who were these SMEs that were exempted?**
  - (b) **Can NFA elaborate on the impact of this policy change?**
  - (c) **Was there a review to change the Government policy or it remained?**
- (a) In accordance with section 12A of the National Fire Safety Act, exempted SMEs are those businesses whose annual gross turnover as certified by the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service does not exceed \$500,000. Although SMEs business premises are still exempted, but they are excluded from paying the inspection and certification fee if they can provide evidence that their annual gross turnover is below \$500,000.
- (b) Even though the renewal of business licence no longer requires a fee for the Fire Safety Compliance Certificate, the Authority still carries out mandatory compliance checks on all SMEs, to ensure that fire safety standards are maintained. However, SMEs are exempted from paying inspection fees if they can provide FRCS certification that they earn below \$500,000.
- (c) There has been no review of the Government policy, the *status quo* remains the same to-date.

### **Question No. 3**

**NFA's operational expenditure during the seven-month period ended 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016 was sustained through revenue generated from fire insurance levies, water levies, structural fire safety compliance earnings and other sources. Can NFA elaborate further on these levies and were there challenges on non-compliance?**

The Fire Service Levy (FSL) is a levy on all insurance policies incepted in Fiji. The levy is 0.06 percent of the sum insured. The levy is collected and remitted to the Authority by the insurance companies and brokers. This levy applies to insured properties situated within the fire boundaries.

Water Levy is a levy on all water meters within a fire boundary. The levy is 50 cents per month which equals to \$1.50 per quarterly. The levy is collected by WAF, who then remits the same to NFA. The levies are not penalties *per se* but a provision under the National Fire Safety Act to fund the Fire Service. Even though the economic landscape of Fiji has changed since 1995, there has been no change to the sum levied to-date, which was implemented in 1995 until today, there is no change.

The NFA would like to see a review of these levies with public consultation, to ensure its sustainability in the long term. The NFA continues to hold *talanoa* sessions with insurance companies

and brokers to ensure that there is a common application of Fire Service Levy, ensuring a standard application being applied across the board.

The legal framework under the National Fire Act 1994 adequately provides the due process if there is non-compliance on the remittances of the levies.

There is a penalty applicable if the sum is not remitted within the stipulated time, which has been an agenda during *talanoa* sessions with insurance companies. As I had mentioned earlier, there is a penalty and if not remitted within 21 days, then there is a fixed penalty of \$2,000 and \$200 per day.

**Question No. 4**

**Can NFA update the Committee on the capital expenditure that was carried out in the seventh month period ending 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016?**

Project	Funds Received	Update
Construction of Nabouwalu Fire Station	\$1,200,000	Construction of the station is completed and is fully operational
Construction Rakiraki Fire Station	\$1,200,000	Construction of the station is completed and is fully operational
Procurement of 20,000L Tanker	\$1,000,000	Tanker procured and fully operational in Suva
Procurement of Second-Hand Fire Trucks	\$400,000	The Authority purchased 7 x secondhand fire trucks in 2016. The seven comprised 3 x ISUZU fire trucks 4x4 and 4 x HINO fire trucks 4x4
Procurement of Fire Fighting Equipment	\$200,000	Firefighting equipment had been procured and is in use by the stations
Procurement of Fire Hydrants	\$900,000	Fire hydrants had been procured and installed by the Water Authority of Fiji around the country.

The Table states all the projects that were undertaken, as follows:

- Construction of the Nabouwalu Fire Station was at a cost of \$1.2 million and that was commissioned on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2022.
- Construction of Rakiraki Fire Station was at a cost of \$1.2 million and was commissioned on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2019.
- Procurement of a 20,000 Litre Tanker which was procured and is fully operational in Suva.
- Procurement of second-hand Fire Trucks - the Authority purchased seven second-hand fire trucks in 2016 which comprised three 4x4 ISUZU fire trucks and four 4x4 HINO trucks.
- Procurement of Fire Fighting Equipment - assorted firefighting equipment had been procurement, distributed and used by all stations. Procurement of Fire Hydrants – procured and installed by WAF around the country.

**Question No. 5**

**The NFA generated \$1.9 million during the seven month period of sale of goods and services. Can the NFA elaborate on the type of goods and services that contributed to the generated amount of \$1.9 million?**

The table below gives a breakdown of this \$1.9 million:

Income	Amount	Description
Amortization of deferred revenue – Government Grant	\$96,014	Government Grants for Capital Projects are first accounted as deferred revenue [liability] and once the project has been completed it is amortized to revenue
Amortization of deferred revenue -Hydrants	\$166,943	Government Grants for Capital Projects are first accounted as deferred revenue [liability] and once the project has been completed it is amortized to revenue
Commission	\$10,629	Fees received for at-source deductions from salaries
Fire Levy Penalty	\$30,800	A fixed penalty of \$2,000 and \$200 per day is charged to the insurance companies for Fire levy to the NFA after the 21st day of the following month.
Ambulance income	\$45,570	Income derived from the hire of ambulances by MoH and Public
Doubtful Debts Recovered	\$218,248	These debts were deemed doubtful but were recovered from the debtors.
Miscellaneous	\$38,514	Hire of the tent, surcharge received, rental of premises by Vodafone.
Rental Income	\$16,200	This is the rental income from 2 Vodafone towers
Special Services	\$228,134	Standby at Pernix Generator installation, standby at the Wailotua Chemical truck accident, standby at secondary school games, standby at rugby matches.
TPAF Grant	\$28,582	TPAF Grant claimable training conducted by the Authority.
Interest	\$89,565	Interest earned from Bank Accounts and Term Deposits
Commercial Training	\$169,787	Fees charged for providing fire safety, firefighting, and evacuation drills.
Structural Fire Safety	\$373,495	Fees from inspection and certification for Fire Safety Compliance.
Discount Received	\$47,423	Discount received on the construction of Waiyevo Fire Station
Private Fire Alarm Rental and Calls	\$143,559	Monthly rental charges for units plus the calls that the NFA attends to false private fire alarms calls.
Gain on Sale of ASEs	\$147,346	Revenue earned from sales of Automatic Fire Alarm Signalling Equipment, which we buy and sell it to the customers, which is

		connected to their alarm system and which transmits the signal to the NFA on the location when this system gets activated.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,850,829</b>	

**Question No. 6**

**The total expenses incurred for seven month period ended on 31<sup>st</sup> July was \$7.8 million, which was an increase as compared to the same period in 2015. Can the NFA elaborate on the increase in expenses and how this was addressed?**

The Authority's operations, as the CEO had mentioned earlier, are growing and services are expanding to the areas outside the boundaries and to the areas where there are no boundaries. Hence, the operation and maintenance costs are increasing.

Two new stations were commissioned in 2016 - Korolevu and Korovou, that contributed to the increase in the operational cost - operational costs, PPEs, utility bills, maintaining manning levels, manpower and fire-fighting appliances and equipment. Our PPEs are very expensive. It costs about \$3,000 per person and to fully uniform an officer would cost around \$10,000. So, it is quite an expensive exercise.

**Question No. 7**

**Can the NFA verify the employee entitlement on leave compensation?**

All employees are encouraged to take their annual leave, once they are eligible for it. As per the Authority's Human Resources Policy, no leave shall be accumulated without the consent of respective HODs, and encashment of leave is the sole discretion of the CEO.

Out of the overall expenses, it was noted that personnel emoluments was very high compared to any other expense, as personnel expenses was at 56 percent and the salaries and wages was 50 percent.

Madam Chairperson, NFA's main asset is the manpower. Hence, it is the highest expenditure. It should also be noted that on Page 16 of the Report that there has been an increase in the number of employees from 355 in 2015 to 394 in 2016. That is the reason for that percentage of expenditure.

**Question No. 8**

**Can NFA provide costing analysis on the assistance rendered for TC Winston during the seven month period?**

After TC Winston struck, a State of Emergency was declared whereby all State resources were under the jurisdiction of the NDMO and Divisional Commissioners. As and when requested, the Authority directed all its resources to areas of need upon directive to carry out clean-ups of towns, roads, hospitals, commercials and residential buildings. Unfortunately, no cost of services was maintained then. However, as from TC Ana and TC Yasa, the Authority has been maintaining all costs incurred in clean-ups, which has been forwarded to NDMO. As administrators of NFA, we have to account for such costs incurred.

**Question No. 9**

**Can NFA clarify the increase in the write-off value of its assets and NFA to provide a written breakdown on the cost of each asset that was written off?**

The written down value mentioned refers to the depreciation charge of \$1.3 million in 2016 in comparison to the year 2015, which charged \$1.2 million. The Authority purchased three fire machines in September and December 2015. The depreciation of the three machines was way less in 2015 which only calculated to \$7,000 for the three months when compared to seven months in 2016 at \$118,000.

**Question No.10**

**Can NFA elaborate on the increased amount of current assets as at 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016 seven month period, compared to 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2015 seven month period?**

The Authority treated Government grant as cash when it is received. A Government grant of \$4.2 million was received in the month of July, which was later utilised in the new period following the financial year of 2016 to 2017. The 2015 Government grant was received in October 2015, thus, it was not recorded as a current asset (cash) in the first seven months of 2015. Unutilised funds at the period end are treated as current assets in the statement of financial position.

**Question No. 11**

**Can NFA verify on the following current assets as specified at the seven month period?**

The \$2.5 million held in maturity investments, \$3.1 million is owed to NFA. The \$2.5 million held to maturity refers to the short term investments that were, at that point in time, with Merchant Finance Limited and Credit Corporation Limited, as detailed in the table below. The table details out what was held in maturity.

<b>NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY INVESTMENTS ENDING 31/07/16</b>		
<b>Institution</b>		<b>Amount</b>
Merchant Finance		
	I15575	261213.15
	I15585	261213.15
	O15286	263946.35
	O15289	281311.17
Credit Corporation		
	252669	1021430.03
	252751	507085.66
<b>Total Investments</b>		<b>\$ 2,596,199.52</b>

The \$3.1 million owed to NFA are detailed in the table below:

<b>Trade and other receivables</b>	
Trade accounts receivable	2,462,998
Less: provision for doubtful debts	(17,512)
	2,445,486
Deposits	24,111
Value Added Tax receivable	835,750
Less: provision for doubtful debts	(312,131)
Staff advances	46,258

Other receivables	67,800
Less: provision for doubtful debts	(1,970)
Total trade and other receivables	3,105,304

These are the trade accounts receivables and debts being owed to NFA, security deposits paid by NFA, staff advances and the surcharges and other receivables. That makes up the provision and it comes to \$3.1 million.

**Question No. 12**

**The value of NFA vehicles totalled \$6.2 million as at 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016. Can NFA provide a breakdown of the NFA vehicles in each Fire Station for the period under review?**

The Authority recorded a written down value of \$6.2 million in Motor Vehicles and Fire Machines from 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016. Below is the breakdown of the cost of the 68 vehicles.

<b>MOTOR VEHICLE AND FIRE MACHINES</b>	<b>Written Down Value \$</b>
<b>MOTOR VEHICLE</b>	
<b>SUVA</b>	
1 only Ford Ranger 4x2 twin cab – Duty officer vehicle- FX660	1,594.20
1 only Ford Ranger 4 x 2 twin cab – DFO Central vehicle-FX659	1,594.20
Maxus V80 Ambulance HM055	39,881.31
Maxus V80 Ambulance HM056	39,881.30
Vehicle HZ 740	59,456.92
Nissan Pajero for CEO – IC931	85,252.17
<b>FIRE TENDER – FIRE MACHINES</b>	
<b>SIGATOKA</b>	
FIRE TENDER ISUZU- DQ 978	912.87
FIRE TRUCK ISUZU- DS 502	3,492.69
FIRE TENDER – DQ 978	7,303.03
New Slip-on Mitsubishi Triton GL from Quick Corp – FK973	33,499.33
<b>SEAQAQA</b>	
FIRE TRUCKS ISUZU – DS 503	3492.69
<b>NAUSORI</b>	
FIRE TRUCK ISUZU – DS 508	2932.176
<b>LEVUKA</b>	
ISUZU FIRE TRUCKS – DS 510	3492.69
<b>LAUTOKA</b>	
ISUZU FIRE TENDER – DQ 978	1212.12
ISUZU FIRE TRUCKS – DS 504	4281.02
<b>LABASA</b>	
ISUZU FIRE TRUCKS – DS 505	3492.69
<b>SUVA</b>	
FIRE TRUCKS – DU 065	35654.82
FIRE TRUCKS – DS 450	3599.80
FIRE TRUCKS – DS 501	3599.80
FIRE TRUCKS – DS 507	3599.80
FIRE TRUCKS – DS 509	3599.80
FIRE TENDER – DQ 979	13236.74
FIRE TENDER – ED651	87731.34



<b>MOTOR VEHICLE AND FIRE MACHINES</b>	<b>Written Down Value \$</b>
FIRE TENDER DONATION	9407.17
New Fire Truck- FI 408	185358.17
RESCUE TRUCK – FI483	13912.18
2 <sup>nd</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG930	18058.81
3 <sup>rd</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG931	18058.81
4 <sup>th</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG932	18058.81
5 <sup>th</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG933	16153.71
6 <sup>th</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG934	16153.71
7 <sup>th</sup> Hand Fire Fighting vehicles from CFA – FG935	16153.71
Fire Truck Mazda, 1994 Model from CFA – FM151	17212.76
Fire truck FO 828	1000504.99
Fire truck FO 826	1071067.43
Fire truck FP 401	43281.29
HD481	41258.17
HD482	41258.17
HD483	41258.17
HD484	41258.17
HD485	41258.17
HD486	41258.16
22m Aerial Pumping Appliance (Fire Truck)- IG061	1028609.29
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle MYW653-1987 Hino GT HN046	65501.25
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle MYW653-1987 Hino GT HN047	65501.24
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN048	43120.78
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN049	43120.78
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN050	43120.78
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN051	43120.78
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN057	43120.78
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN058	43120.79
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN059	43120.79
secondhand Firefighting Vehicle Isuzu HN060	43120.79
1xscania multipurpose fire appliance HS508	1243612.71
Fire Truck – ISUZU FTR TYP – HD487	33013.80
Fire Truck – HINO GT 4x4-HD482	34509.59
Fire Truck – HINO GT 4x4-HD483	33004.52
Fire Truck – HINO GT 4x4-HD485	34499.88
Fire Truck – HINO GT 4x4-HD486	34495.03
Fire Truck – ISUZU FSR 4x4-FG931	20994.02
Fire Truck – ISUZU FSR 198-FG932	20991.06
Purchase of Fire – ISUZU FTR TYP -FG934	19440.99
Purchase of Fire Trucks – HINO GT 4X4	19438.26
Purchase of Fire Trucks – HINO GT 4X4	19435.53
Purchase of Fire Trucks – HINO GT 4X4	19432.80
Purchase of Fire Trucks – HINO GT 4X4	19430.07
Purchase of Fire Trucks – ISUZU FSR 4X	19427.34
Purchase of Fire Trucks – ISUZU FSR 198	19424.61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,229,452.33</b>

First, is motor vehicles and the station is Suva and all the vehicles that were in Suva at that point in time, and their values are there. Then Fire Tender, these are the Fire Machines. Then we have Sigatoka and the details, Seaqaqa, Nausori, Levuka, Lautoka, Labasa, Suva and the list goes on, worth \$6.2 million.

**Question No. 13**

**There were goods and services not yet paid for during the seven-month period as at 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016, as specified in the report. Can NFA provide an update on the collection of money owed to them?**

These goods and services not paid refers to the trade creditors. I think there was some confusion here, Madam Chairperson. This is for the payment that NFA owed to the suppliers. It is not that money is owed to NFA but NFA owes money. So, trade creditors are the vendors whom NFA had issued purchase orders and goods were yet to be received. Some projects were continued to the next financial year so those are the trade creditors.

The accruals, these are accruals under accrual accounting, we have to account for the advances, the payments to be made which is due, so that was accounted for that.

That is on finance. Now, Mr. Israel will continue with the training.

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, I will continue from where Manager Finance has left off.

**Question No. 14**

**Can NFA elaborate on the types of training that officers attend in order to respond to emergencies? How effective are those trainings? Were there any shortfalls in officers responding to the different types of emergencies? How did NFA overcome those shortfalls?**

The NFA has specialised Departments, like the one that I lead, the Fire Safety and Compliance Department, the Operations Department that conducts trainings and both the Commercial Training Departments provide Fire Safety and Fire Prevention Training as enacted in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1996

The NFA Operations Department is conducting training according to the annual training and drill programmes. In the operation and also in the department, we have two separate drills and training manuals that are both provided by the NFA Training Department. Each person should carry out compulsory training for two hours on a daily basis from Monday to Friday. For internal training, all firefighters must go through promotional training in order to move up to another level. So, that is the pre-requisite for promotion - they go through the promotion training in order to go up the next level on their gradings.

For external training, some of our firefighters were given the opportunity to undertake training available abroad through JICA. So, there is a partnership between JICA and NFA to send the Officers for training, to Singapore, Jakarta and Malaysia in terms of firefighting, just to upgrade and to benchmark the skills that we currently have with a much higher benchmarking.

They also go through training in firefighting, rescue techniques, hazardous material, natural disaster, community-based training, urban search and rescue, swift water and flood rescue, and other related rescue trainings, like high-rise building training, high angle rescue and low angle rescue. We

see the need for our Officers to be trained on high-rise buildings because of the new construction and building topologies that are flooding our country. So, there is a need to upgrade to upskill our firefighters on how to combat those fires in each occurrence.

The training level that our current Officers attained was the knowledge being imparted by those who have attended those trainings and those who have been taught on station basis. Officers also attend the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) through correspondence and have attained preliminary certificates and graduated. These are self-paid and also reimbursed by NFA for Fire Officers who are willing to pursue in that area of getting certified as a Fire Engineer, which is not offered in any of the institutions in Fiji but is offered in Australia and the United Kingdom.

Unfortunately, NFA is one of the exempted stations in this part of the Pacific that also offered examination locations only that has been received over the past years and some of our fire fighters and officers have acquired a diploma level in this country.

So, one of the shortfalls that we currently have for training is that, we do not have a training academy whereby officers can utilise the facilities available for capacity building and utilise what is available in the training ground. That is something that NFA is looking at working towards getting a dedicated training academy. I believe we also have witnessed the graduation of 82 of our young firefighter candidates. We are carrying this out with the courtesy of our naval partners at the Naval Base at Togalevu. So, this is something that NFA is focusing on, engaging a training academy – a fully international recommended fire academy that can be matched to Australia and New Zealand at this point. So, the land has been secured for that facility and will be on the ground when the funds are available, or if it is available by the Government if we are lucky enough.

Although our staff are highly trained for all rescue and emergency operations, our machine capabilities are limited to eight-storey buildings. I just want to elaborate more on that.

The expertise that we have with Structural Fire Safety (SFS), plan vetting and also providing commentary on high rise buildings, we only have expertise up to eight-storey buildings and the machines also, as I have already mentioned, it only goes up to eight-storey buildings. From eight-storey buildings and above, we train and we ensure that we enforce our prevention measures on specifications of materials and the fire levels of resistant for materials that are imported into the country, and also the prevention measures that are installed as part of the building services, that is, before we come to dose off the fire, the building itself should be able to fight itself by the mechanism that has already been placed within the 8<sup>th</sup> floor and above. Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson.

MR. Q. MOCEITAL.- Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, I will continue from the next question.

**Question No. 15**

**From the Emergency Incident Responses attended to by NFA as stipulated in the Annual Report - Fire Responses, Fire Causes, Road Accident Rescue, Hazardous Material Rescue, Urban Search and Rescue, Swift and Flood Water rescue and Rescue and Natural Disasters Response, can NFA:**

- (a) **elaborate on the challenges faced when attending to emergencies mentioned above and how was this addressed?**

The most common challenges that we faced are -

- Late notification to NFA;
- Emergency calls during peak times or road congestion;
- Road accessibility;
- Distance from stations;
- Non-availability of a dedicated NFA Emergency line; and
- lack of fire hydrants and specialized rescue equipment and machinery.

We have establishment 910 dedicated toll-free line for fire and emergency rescues. Prior to 2016, there were only 14 Fire Stations and two new Fire Stations - Korolevu and Korovou, were commissioned in 2016.

NFA has procured portable water pumps for drafting water from surrounding water sources.

**(b) Discuss further on training and development of Officers in attending to the different types of emergencies?**

As discussed in Question No. 14, our Officers are sent overseas to do courses related to firefighting and rescue, and first responders for ambulance services. We have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that can assist Officers in responding to emergency and are used to clarify some of the issues found to be lacking in any emergency responses.

**(c) Further elaborate on the challenges and the way forward on the spillage at Wailotua and coordination of evacuation with NDMO in responding to natural disasters?**

The biggest challenges we faced in the Wailotua chemical spill are as follows:

- (i) The Authority's power on hazardous material which is limited only to its storage and not to its mode of transportation. The way forward is that the transportation of hazardous material must comply with LTA requirements. The driver and the transportation of goods should have the required permits. Also, the impact of leakage could have been catastrophic, that could affect the environment and the livelihood of neighbouring villages, humans and livestock.
- (ii) Timely notification to those who would be potentially affected by the spill/incident. The way forward is that a highest level of compliance is warranted, as stated in (1) above, as the Authority will not condone the reoccurrence of such incidents because of its high risk as stated above.

**Question No. 16**

**Can NFA elaborate on the reasons for the highest number of fire cases for the period under review, that is, structural fires, electrical-related fires and fire-related incidents?**

On structural fires, electrical remains the highest cause of structural fires from 2016 to date, with an annual average of 33 percent of all fire causes tabulated. So, 90 percent to 95 percent of structural fires occur in residential homes and 5 percent to 10 percent occur in industrial buildings. The figures from the table depicts the different levels of fire safety compliance to the National Building Codes in these two sectors.

The NFA, at the moment, only inspects and certifies industrial and commercial properties for fire safety compliances. These compliance levels are based on the National Building Codes, the Health and Safety at Work Act and the National Fire Service Act.

The NFA, in accordance with the National Building Code, vets and approves all industrial and commercial building plans prior to construction to ensure compliancy. On the other hand, even though NFA is also empowered by the National Fire Service Act to inspect and certify residential premises, we are yet to implement the same as there needs to be a collaborative approach between approving agencies.

MR. P. SOWANE.- That is for residential purpose.

**Question No. 17**

**Due to electrical fires being the highest number (30 percent) for causes of fire, how is NFA working with stakeholders to address the highest number of electrical fires and other causes of fire?**

Recently, NFA was fully engaged in the review of the National Building Code which addressed the shortfalls in the Code in terms of Electrical Section E. The Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Meteorological Services is the leading stakeholder in the review of the National Building Code and has completed the consultation process. The new Building Code redefines ways to protect residential homes and has included compulsory compliance to improve fire safety and reduce unwanted fires.

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Madam Chairperson, on the amendments to the Electrical Section E that my colleague has mentioned, we have made some changes on that. There was no coverage of that section in the old National Building Code, so NFA was heavily involved in consultation with the overseas consultant that was roped in by the Ministry of Infrastructure, now the Public Works. So, we looked at areas that cover cooking in the safety of both, commercial and domestic kitchen.

On electrical, we have introduced an electrical system design that has to be designed by electrical engineers, and also focusing on the grounding of the wires. There was an area that was not covered under the old one which is the protection of the wet area of the power points, et cetera, around the pools and around wet surfaces.

One of the very important ones too is the wiring where we referred to AS 3000 2018 standards and focusing on types of wires and standards of wires. That too has not been clearly demarcated in the old National Building Code so the NFA addresses those which we saw was the big downfall in the causes of electrical faults.

So, in single homes, we have upgraded the standard for a smoke alarm that you can have a draft when that comes through, that all residential homes must have smoke alarms installed in all placements - in the kitchen, in the hallway and, for example, for a three-bedroom residential, can install about four to be in the populated areas. So that is something that has been put up by NFA as its remedial mitigation to reduce fires in residential.

Also, a new standard requirement for two access points of fire escape. Usually, it was not mentioned as well in the old Code. The NFA sees fit that we have to implement two access points on residential.

Also, for large buildings, firefighting equipment and a place for safety. So when you see a building rise, you see a place that has to be fortified for two hours so that other occupants would be able to make their way down to the ground floor safely, and also allow the firefighters to have access to them before the entire building crumbles.

The last one, we are big on smoke detection that are coming up on large buildings and also ensuring enforcement with fire installation. That is one of the big milestones that the NFA has planted into the new Code awaiting approval from Cabinet.

MR. P. SOWANE.- Please, continue to the next question (Question No. 18) Manager Fire Security.

MR. J. ISRAEL.- We will move on to the next question.

**Question No. 18**

**Can NFA elaborate on fire safety initiatives for commercial and residential properties?**

Under Section 11A(2) of the National Fire Service Act, we are empowered to inspect and certify all commercial and residential buildings. In saying that, we are strengthening our fire safety compliance roles for all commercial, industrial and residential buildings.

We have trained and certified 32 Firefighters to be dedicated NFS inspectors responsible for the inspection of these buildings, to ensure that the fire safety standards are enacted too. This has been a pilot exercise for NFA, for the past year, that we loan about 32 Firefighters from Operations to be dedicated Fire Inspectors, who go from house to house and not so much on the inspection, they are also exercising the power that has been enacted for them to check all commercial, industrial and also, we are starting with schools.

All those have been embedded into the powers that we can generally exercise, but we have not been dwelling on the schools. Lately, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, we have started with boarding schools and religious institutions.

As earlier alluded to in the last question, the revised Building Code captures the safety requirement standards of residential buildings. In the meantime, the Authority is rolling out an Integrated Community Fire Wardens Framework in the various communities in Fiji. This Framework is the new initiative to prevent the occurrence of unwanted fires and other emergencies by engaging in partnerships with communities. I believe this has also been raised by the CEO on his opening address this morning.

Under this Framework, the Authority carries out two weeks of intensive training to enable them to conduct fire safety checks within their communities. They are taught basic life support, fire evacuation drills, smokehouse awareness, swift water rescue, first aid training, fire safety at home, fire warden and fire team training.

MR. P. SOWANE.-

**Question No. 19**

**Elaborate on how was the Ambulance Response Service during the period under review? Due to the number of calls received, identify the areas of where the assistance were rendered?**

During the period under review, NFA had seven ambulances operating in Suva, Valelevu, Nausori, Sigatoka, Ba, Rakiraki and Labasa Fire Stations. Under the NFS Act, NFA is mandated to operate within the fire boundaries, but due to the criticalness of the services required by communities, we have rendered the services far and beyond our legislated fire service boundaries.

Our ambulance services immediate priority is to attend to fire calls and road accidents, however, due to the 24/7 work shift we had, it was seen fit to look after the general public.

MR. J. ISRAEL.-

**Question No. 20**

**Elaborate as to why the implementation of the Fire Security Curriculum was only limited to Early Childhood Education, Year 1 and Year 2?**

Since the establishment of NFA in 1995, we have been carrying out fire safety awareness in Fiji. The outcomes of this programme identified that children adapt well to our fire safety messages compared to adults.

A practical example of this was in a fire scene in 2006 where a little girl who was about eight to ten years of age, had saved her 80-year-old grandparent from a fire in their home in Flagstaff. The little girl was taught by our Fire Safety trainers to crawl for safety if she was trapped in the house during a fire. With these learnings, she had woken her granddad and told him to follow her by crawling for safety because of the smoke and heat in the burning house. She managed to save her granddad and this is when the Authority decided to take fire evacuation drills at an early stage due to this little girl's success story.

With the assistance of the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Unit and UNICEF, NFA was able to develop student workbooks and a teacher's guide for the teaching of fire safety as part of the Health Science Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, Year 1, Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6. These workbooks were developed and launched in 2013 and 2014.

Early in January this year, our Senior Management Team comprising of the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Fire Officer, Manager Fire Safety and Compliance and Manager Legal, met with the Acting Permanent Secretary for Education to discuss further, including fire safety education in the Secondary School Curriculum. Additionally, we also discussed the opportunity to include fire safety as a core unit at the university level, following that OHS is also now a compulsory unit for Trade Diploma Certificates.

MR. P. SOWANE.-

**Question No. 21**

**Considering Taveuni as a volunteer-based station, has NFA upgraded this to a permanent station due to its geographical location?**

Yes, the station has been upgraded to a permanent station on 2nd March, 2017, which is now manned by 21 fully qualified Firefighters, as you can see in the picture below.

**Question No. 22**

**Have NFA procured upgraded fleet to cater for high story buildings?**

Madam Chairperson, yes, on 31st December, 2015, NFA procured 2x28 metres boom hydraulic ladder trucks which was procured from United Kingdom and they are still in the NFA Fleet as of today. These are very precise and expensive ladder trucks. The cost of each truck is around a million dollars for one, so it is a very expensive piece of equipment for NFA.

MR. J. ISRAEL.-

**Question No. 23**

**What are the challenges on the enforcement of fire safety compliance in new developments to include fire risk mitigating infrastructure and equipment and installation of fire hydrant as part of any new development project cost?**

Madam Chairperson, Section 11A of the National Fire Service Act empowers the NFA's Fire Safety and Compliance Department to vet and approve new subdivisions. So, this is one of the roles of the Department that I look after.

We look after the approval and we also grant approval to applications for new subdivisions and new commercial and residential building plans. We are still now receiving applications for new subdivisions and commercials, but we have not exercised in the Act the power to vet residential. So, in the new subdivision plans, the Safety and Compliance Department ensures that fire hydrants are appropriately and strategically positioned for ease of access of Fire Machines.

The challenges in this area are:

1. Developers place height restrictions for vehicle access. One that we have brought up as an example is access from Vishnu Deo Road to the subdivision behind Rup's Mega Complex and also height restriction to Lees Complex at Ratu Dovi Road. This is where we find the developers only allow trucks of certain heights because our trucks are over 3.2 metres in height. Some of their restrictions only allow taxi heights to enter their subdivisions. That is where we require specifications and also indications of those who have been implementing subdivisions and we advise them accordingly.
2. Preference for one-way traffic over two lanes. What we have also encountered is that, some of the developers only have preferences of allowing a single lane entering into their premises. That also is a challenge in terms of getting the fire dosed off. Then we have to also advise and consult the developers on that area.
3. Poor Traffic Impact Assessment Plan. Some have this but they are not submitted with the subdivision drawings that we are normally after and this comes up every time.

For industrial and commercial buildings, the Fire and Safety Compliance Department is empowered to vet, approve and monitor all buildings for compliance with fire safety in accordance with the National Building Codes.

The challenges that we face now is that:

1. Designers lack knowledge of the National Building Codes.
2. Building plans designed by foreign architects are written in their own language. Some of the buildings we have rescinded in the past years have been drawn by foreign architects. As far as the law is concerned, foreign architects must be localized or



working under a local partner to be able to interpret any of the foreign languages into English or into readable text.

3. Developers' evasive tactics to avoid compliance with fire safety standards to lower project costs. That too has been a common occurrence with multiple developments that we have had, that is, they submit two subdivisions separately. For example, a building that only requires sprinklers should be well above 2,000 square metres. Anything above that will require the developer to install them, so it is the developer's fault and through his cunning evasive tactic, to submit in two parts that they are being lowered just to evade that cost. That is also a point that we normally look into in relation to submissions and approvals.
4. Fire Safety Building Inspectors are denied access by building owners to conduct inspections. That too has always been a problem with us because we carry our IDs with us and also the power that is vested in this Department to carry this out. Unfortunately, some of us are being left out behind the gate. Also, we have been discussing with them on the penalties maybe the Manager Legal can elaborate more on that in the later stages of this presentation.

MR. P. SOWANE.-

**Question No. 24**

**During the period under review, new fire hydrants were purchased by NFA but was continuously challenged by the inability of Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) to adequately mobilise teams for the installation of these fire hydrants. What did NFA do to address this issue?**

These were issues of delayed installation but this was resolved through meetings and all fire awareness have been successfully installed around the country. The NFA and WAF continue to engage and discuss areas of interest. This is historical data we are talking about here.

**Question No. 25**

**It was noted that there were hydrants that were inspected during the period and defect hydrants have been reported to WAF for repair. Can NFA provide statistics on the 2,870 hydrants - how many were in good working condition and how many were defective? How did NFA address the issue at hand?**

As I have alluded to earlier, Madam Chairperson, these are historical data and all defective fire hydrants have been repaired upon referral by WAF.

**Question No. 26**

**Can NFA provide a breakdown of the commercial training that was conducted? Provide details of men and women participants, age category, division and unemployment sector.**

Madam Chairperson, tabulated is the breakdown of the training conducted during the year under review.

MR. S. JEET.- Madam Chairperson, further to the details, the table also depicts the gender by division, female over the Central, Northern, Western Divisions and male for Central, Western and Northern Divisions' participants who took part in these 273 trainings.

**Question No. 27**

**NFA responded to a total of 542 Private Fire Alarm calls. From these calls, how many were found faulty and what has NFA done to address these faulty lines?**

MR. E. RADIO.- Madam Chairperson, of the total calls, 542 were received through the Alarm Signaling Equipment (ASE). The 542 calls received were all genuine and were automatically transmitted to the Authority's Control Room. So back in 2016, it was just the Control Room before the National Command Centre was established.

As soon as the detectors in the building detect any smoke or heat, it triggers and transmits to the National Command Centre the building name and the location. So the nearest response team is dispatched to the building.

The response team carries out a thorough search of the building and determines whether there is an actual cause or a false alarm. If there is no fire, it is classified as a false alarm and the building owner is penalised and prescribed fee to recover the cost of the run.

In 2016, a total of 210 properties were monitored by the NFA's fire monitoring system of which five units were found to be faulty. The property owners had been advised and the units were replaced with new ones.

The NFA, through the Structural Fire Safety and Compliance (SFSC) Department, conducts annual building inspections which include verifying that private fire alarm systems are maintained regularly. Failure to maintain their private fire alarm system will result in non-compliance and NFA's Compliance Certificate will be withheld. It is the responsibility of the building owners to maintain and service their private fire alarm systems.

**Question No. 28**

**How many commercials and advertisements were carried out during the period under review? Did NFA carry out an analysis to know the effectiveness of the adverts and commercials to its readers and viewers?**

The NFA released the following fire safety commercials and advertisements during the seven-month period:

- A total of 44 media statements from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016.
- A total of 675 spots, including bonus spots on *Fiji TV*, *Sky TV*, *FBC TV*, and 750 spots on Communications Fiji Limited, featuring 30-sec commercials on fire safety tips featured for six months from January to June 2016.
- Fire safety tips featured every Friday on the *Fiji Sun's* "It's Friday" column from January to June 2016.

The mass media is an effective mode for dissemination of awareness messages, but it is also a very costly mode. The NFA also conducts community fire safety awareness programmes through its 18 Fire Stations around the country, and for the seven month-period, NFA delivered a total of 1,203 programmes involving house to house visitations, community awareness programmes, and school visits reaching a total population of 67,857.

Whilst great effort has been made towards reaching as great an audience as possible, the effectiveness of these fire safety messages is measured against the number of structural fires that

occurred during the period. The total number of structural fires for the seven month period to 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016 was 81, compared to 63 for the same period in 2015 - a 28 percent increase, confirming that more concerted efforts should be engaged with stakeholders for assistance with fire safety awareness campaigns in order to change people's attitudes towards fire safety.

**Question No. 29**

**How was NFA's engagement with social media platforms during the period under review? Elaborate on the challenges and the way forward in undertaking this type of engagement?**

Madam Chairperson, NFA's social media platforms were *Facebook* and *Twitter* whereby the Media Officer posts NFA's official media releases to all media and including NFA's *FB* and *Twitter* pages. The information released has the prior approval of the CEO, and is only focused on fire incidents and fire safety messages that people need to be aware off to avoid the occurrence of unwanted fires.

These portals were used purely for information dissemination and focused on the number of people viewing the information released on these pages. These pages have been favourably received by the public. For 2022-2023, NFA's social media pages were discontinued due to system virus intrusions and NFA is revisiting these platforms for continuation as fire safety information dissemination portals.

**Question No. 30**

**The NFA, during the seven month period, was operating without a full NFA Board membership and a substantive Chief Executive Officer. What were the challenges faced by Management and staff?**

The challenges faced during the seven-month period without a full Board and a substantive CEO were more related to corporate governance matters such as:

- delay in the appointment of the full Board also delayed the appointment of a new CEO.
- delay in the appointment of a substantive CEO which required the full Board's endorsement before Ministerial approval.
- delay in the commencement of new Government-funded projects, such as the new Rakiraki Fire Station and the new Nabouwalu Fire Station, which required the CEO and the Board's approvals for the engagement of civil works and construction works contractors.
- delay in other capital projects such as procurement of vehicles, equipment and other infrastructural improvements due to the absence of a CEO and full Board.
- whilst day-to-day administration of the Authority were addressed through the Authority's existing policies and procedures, administered by the NFA Board Chairman (who was the only Board member whose term was renewed), Management had to maintain all documentations daily for endorsement and ratification by the NFA Board in due course.

**Question No. 31**

**What was the reason for those 16 community volunteers not being paid any allowances or wages? How did NFA managed to sustain those volunteers?**

Those volunteers were youth and members of the community in villages near Stations, who came in as community-based volunteers under the recommendations of the Station Officer. They were not paid any allowances but purely volunteered their time to learn basic firefighting skills. They had to attend two hours of drills a week to learn the basics of firefighting skills.

MR. S. JEET.-

**Question No. 32**

**Can NFA elaborate on the two basis of qualified opinion that was stated in the Auditor's Report? How did NFA ensure that this was not a recurring issue?**

The Authority has been carrying out annual inventory stocktakes and Board of Survey (BOS) of Assets. However, there had been an oversight on the part of the Authority to invite the Office of the Auditor-General to be part of the team to carry out the annual inventory stocktake and BOS of assets. Following the 2015 Audit, the Authority is now engaging the Office of the Auditor-General to be part of the team, commencing from 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2019.

MR. P. SOWANE.-

**Question No. 33**

**Can NFA elaborate on its contribution to SDG performance targets? What were the challenges?**

The NFA has incorporated the 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plans and Sustainable Development Goals into its 2021-2026 Strategic Plan and implemented through the development of its annual Costed Operational Plans, with specific targets, timelines and responsibilities to ensure progress towards the achievement of these plans and the achievement of the Authority's vision for the next five years which is, Resilient Communities with effective Emergency Services.

Whilst the Government, through the Ministry of Housing, has established a relief package of \$5,000 for the recovery of all fire victims who had lost their homes in a fire, NFA assists by providing the fire victims with the necessary forms to complete and submit to the Ministry for processing.

The Authority has also implemented its NFA Command Centre and Computer Aided Dispatch System which receives and digitizes all 910 Fire Emergency calls, enhancing the Authority's response, efficiency, and effectiveness of its service delivery to the communities for early mitigation of the impact of fires.

The Authority has also identified new initiatives in its Strategic Plan and the annual Costed Operational Plans to design and implement measures to localise and realise the Sustainable Development Goals through the:

- implementation of the framework for an integrated community approach that involves the Authority working with communities on the concept of training and certifying selected Community Fire Wardens for the prevention or early mitigation of home fires in their communities.
- the Authority's key role in the current review of the Fiji National Building Code for strengthening fire safety aspects of the Code, to enhance fire safety compliance in all building structures in Fiji.

- development of the Fiji Fire Service Standards as a supplementary document to Fiji's National Building Code to regulate and strengthen all fire-related issues in Fiji. This is something that the Authority is still working on.
- The introduction of ISO standards in the Authority is also expected to raise the standard of service provided by the Authority, as I have alluded to earlier.

Some measures that require good coordination for the effective implementation of Sustainable Development Goals should include:

- development of a policy framework to support fire safety compliance for all structures;
- provision of incentives for donor agencies to support fire safety awareness;
- border control of all substandard electrical items and firefighting equipment; and
- devising an effective mode for knowledge transfer so that the public can quickly learn from others' experiences and prevent fires.

**Question No. 34**

**Can NFA highlight its contribution towards SDG 5 - Gender Equality and its implementation in the work carried out by the organisation?**

The NFA's contribution towards SDG 5 has been in the inclusion of female into the predominantly male career firefighter profession. This inclusivity approach commenced in 2006 with the recruitment of its first female firefighter. However, infrastructural improvements were also a key component that needed to be expedited such as the Fire Stations having to include female facilities in relation to dormitories and conveniences. Whilst the recruitment and selection criteria is consistent to both genders, the required fitness levels differ due to their physical structure and competency.

Government funding assistance provided in 2009 enabled NFA to commence the upgrade of its fire station facilities to include female facilities, starting with the new Nadi Fire Station in 2010. With further funding assistance from Government, NFA was also able to establish modern Fire Station facilities in Korolevu, Korovou, Rakiraki, Seaqaqa, Savusavu, Taveuni, Nakasi, Lami and Nabouwalu, as I have already alluded earlier on.

With the inclusion of female facilities in these new fire stations, NFA has been able to progress the inclusion of more female into the firefighting profession. As of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016, NFA had a total of six female firefighters, compared to seven in 2015. The NFA will continue to recruit female firefighters.

We thank you, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- *Vinaka vakalevu*, Mr. Puamau and your team from the National Fire Authority, for a very comprehensive presentation on your responses to the questions raised by the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

I will now give the floor to the honourable Members for their supplementary questions but before I do that, I just have one question with regards to the construction of the Nabouwalu Fire Station. I note that it was commissioned on 29th April, 2022. Why was it commissioned in 2022 when it was a capital project of 2016?

MR. P. SOWANE.- Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson, for the question. Yes, the Nabouwalu Fire Station was one of the most challenging Fire Stations for us to construct. First of all, the location of the Fire Station. Initially, NFA was looking at establishing the fire station at the bottom. If you have visited the fire station, it is located at an elevated location.

Our intention was to build the station at the bottom of the hill. We sought the advice of our engineers, however, they advised us that building it at the base of the hill can incur a lot of cost because of the retaining wall, and it will be very steep to try and put the retaining wall. So there was another change of scope in that. We had to take it through the Board again and then proposed to take it up to the top site.

I think there was an agreement at that time with the Management and their Project Engineer to locate it where it is right now. That was the reason why we had put it up there. When it was there, there was another problem - the access. How are we going to have our big trucks going up to the hill?

The ease of accessibility of our big fire trucks going up and when there is a fire call, coming down from where our current location is, to the left of it there is Naulumatua and then the hospital is directly opposite. There is a lot of planning involving FRA to come in to try and figure out how we are going to move these big machines if there is a fire at Naulumatua. It is a very sharp bend going there. So, that has to go back to FRA for approval on how we are going to access. It was an administration delay on that project.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I now give the floor to honourable Members for any supplementary questions.

HON. S. KIRAN.- Through you, Madam Chairperson, thank you very much for a very comprehensive report. One of the things that we really appreciate is that the Fire Authority is a crucial service. We know that you stand in times of emergencies.

I am a little confused in some of the things that you have said will happen, should happen, and I am not sure how that will happen - things like fire boundaries, who is responsible for extending fire boundaries and how long does it take? Despite the fire boundaries, there is a call you are attending, so should the fire boundary be all over Fiji or if there is going to be a shift, who is going to do it and how?

If I may just add a few questions and you can answer at leisure; I am also a little concerned, you are saying that only eight storey buildings are allowable under the current Building Code, but we have seen approvals of higher storey buildings and I am concerned about the safety. How did that happen?

You have also talked about evacuation services, disaster and Building Codes, I am just wondering whether earthquake is something that we take into account in terms of planning and thinking in terms of the Building Code because Suva has had a massive earthquake in 1953 and we have been told that that same frequency or higher could happen again, so just wondering about the natural disasters.

On chemical protection, your team said in the report that you do not have chemical protection necessarily but you have to deal with something like that, and you said that it is quite costly to do that. I am wondering whether it is part of the plan or how you are going to access the chemical protection for the staff?

You have also talked about international building standards and you have included the current Building Code. I am wondering whether some of these things have been taken into account?

You have talked about on the lack of a training academy and sending people away. I am just wondering whether until you build an academy school, are you able to partner with organisations like Fiji Police Force or others who have an academy to support the training? It is a wonderful initiative that you have partnered for ambulance training from Victoria, I am wondering whether there is possible partnership with other ambulance providers so that capacity is also built?

One of the highest number of fires recorded was bush fires. I understand you have been going and working on bush fires, but I am wondering whether there is an investigation carried out by other agencies on how and why these bush fires happen? Some happened in the same areas again and again, and whether there is any deterrent so that people do not do that.

For now, my final question would be the use of media. You have shared how you are working with the media, I am wondering when you are buying spots whether you were able to also ask, like televisions to run free competitions, quizzes, et cetera, and whether you have a marketing person to work continuously on social media to educate people on managing fire?

MR. P. SOWANE.- Madam Chairperson, the Manager Legal can attend to the first question on the fire boundary.

MR. E. RADIO.- Madam Chairperson, just with respect to the question on fire boundary, to understand the National Fire Service Act, the provisions only apply to fire boundaries. The Act specifies that fire boundaries has to be gazetted or it is part of municipalities. So, if we look at the city area of Suva, that is a fire boundary. If you look at town like Nausori, that is a fire boundary.

However, there are other areas not a municipal or a city but boundaries have been established so our Act can also apply in it. For example, Seaqaqa, it is not a municipality or city, but there is a dedicated fire industry that has been gazetted.

In terms of who is to gazette it, it is our line Minister - the Minister of Local Government. What we do is that, NFA will make assessments where we need to increase the boundaries or where we need to establish new boundaries and then we make those submissions to the Local Government. Once the Minister sees that the qualifications have been met, as alluded to by the CEO that there is a need for the services to be there, that the community needs those services and whether the community is willing to partner with the NFA, once those elements are met and the Minister is satisfied depending on his preference, right now we can take it up to Parliament, because for that we do not need Parliament to sit but we can take it up to Cabinet. We have done the submissions and it is before the Ministry of the Local Government with respect to some of the boundaries we have identified.

MR. P. SOWANE.- Madam Chairperson, the Chief Fire Officer can you elaborate more on building our capacity on resources – our capability?

MR. Q. MOCEITAI.- Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, in terms of our capabilities, the hydraulic platform that we have only reaches eight storeys, and this is the medium of our transporting the firefighters from ground level to eight storey buildings. Above that, we do not have any other ladders to take us up to the maximum height of that building. The other way we can do our fire-fighting is to go through the stairs or the lift provided.

However, in Fiji we hardly use the lift because of the construction of the building. It is not made for firefighting, it is made only for the customers and occupants to travel in. So, the only limitation is on the machineries that we have but for firefighting we have capabilities to fight fires on the tall buildings that we have at the moment.

On chemical protection, we have our Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to respond to chemical hazardous material. In terms of our response, we do not respond by ourselves, we have to contact other agencies to assist us - those who are storing those kinds of chemicals, in trying to control or try to eliminate the risk from that hazardous material. For example, in Wailotua, we also contacted those stakeholders who are agents of those kinds of chemicals and we also asked the Permanent Secretary responsible for National Disaster and Management to assist us in requesting for the resources that we would like to use in terms of controlling that spill.

MR. P. SOWANE.- Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, if I may add on that, in terms of our capacity and honourable Kiran was concerned with some of the buildings that are now gone up to more than eight levels now, I think in that sense, and Manager Fire Safety has elaborated on how we are going to form our attack on that. For NFA, our capability is only to the eighth level.

However, what we are doing now is we are strengthening our powers within the Act and that is the compliance rate should be very very high and that is why we are very strict in giving out approval on tall buildings because that will also involve fire engineers to give us the confidence that the tall buildings are fire safe and the buildings are fire compliant.

In saying that, for us in the National Fire Authority, the best way of attack is to avoid fire. As I had mentioned earlier in our first pillar, our focus has shifted from being reactive to proactive. So, before fires we should be on the ground, so what we are trying to do now is to be more visible to the members of the public, we do not want to be invisible to the members of the public like years ago where members of the public can only see NFA when there is a fire. We want to be seen. Even before the fire, we are seen on the ground to do our ground work, to help and seize our people, to educate them on how to avoid unwanted fires. Can we have Mr. Israel to speak on the building standards and academy, please?

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Thank you very much, honourable Kiran. Just adding on, as the CEO has explained on the eighth storey buildings, the Department of SFS on our vetting section, NFA has the capacity to vet up to eight storeys. Eight storeys and above will require the submitter or the developer to accompany their submissions with a fire engineering report because we do not have a fire engineer here in Fiji. That is why we need a developer to provide us with a fire engineering report and their submission comes together with specifications of the materials that they are going to build on this building.

With that in mind, then we have the submissions and we require that the materials that are subjected to approval must go through a certain lab that is also being approved internationally that needs to come through into Fiji because we only recognise Australian standards, New Zealand standards and the United Kingdom standards. Any standard that is out of the boundary of these standards, we will require that particular lab to have their documents ready because all these materials that are certified by IKLA lab, we allow them to be importing into Fiji. Anything that is outside IKLA certified, we will need extra documents to accompany that submission.

We would love NFA to be on the road of certifying the materials on their fire safety levels, resistance fire level where a particular material, when it is getting to that 700 degree and 100 degree,



it buckles because if you look at the buildings that are coming up, in the National Building Code, all the materials that are used for construction must reach their bulking point at least two hours.

The new Building Code is asking for three hours, that is allowing our firefighters to empty these tall high rise buildings and to allow the building to fight on its own before we come in. Prevention measures are actually activating before our firefighters come, rescue and dose off the fire. So, hand in hand, the prevention measures together with the firefighting end of NFA we are working hand in hand in getting the approval to its highest buildings and also are certified.

You see that majority of the buildings that are coming through must go through Municipal Councils and before the approvals are being submitted for permission of construction, the last approval must come from NFA and we have the capacity to enter the eight-storey and below, and the ones above eight-storey and the 28-storeys that we have. So, NFA has the capacity to do that in partnership with external fire engineers and also our existing manpower. Thank you very much.

MR. P. SOWANE.- On your queries with regard to academy, for your information, Madam Chairperson, the NFA Fire Officers in terms of the Police Academy, we cannot use their facility and any other academy. The only one that we are using now is the Naval Base Academy at Togalevu, specifically because the trainings are different. We need smoke houses where our people need to practice and the only facility in Fiji that has that smoke house is the one in Togalevu.

Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, not only that, for training the firefighters, we need a proper academy where we have facilities for smoke house, high rise towers, et cetera, because their scope of work is very intensive. It also include high rise or high rise angle fire attack and all those things which require specialised facilities.

I actually visited Japan in one of my visits even before I joined NFA and I was at JICA HQ in Tokyo and right below it is the fire station for Tokyo. I was amazed at how it has been set up, on a daily basis, how they trained. They have various stages of training facilities that are there for them. So, we are looking forward to have some sort of facility to be able to have our firefighters to have the same capability as our counterparts in Australia and also in New Zealand.

In terms of bushfires, Madam, bushfire is legally within NFA when it operates within its legal boundary. We are supposed to be just operating within the legal boundary, not outside of the boundary but because of the criticalness of the service that we do provide to the members of the public, we cannot ignore anyone. So, we have to attend to it even if they called from the interior, we will travel up there. If we are late or what, we will still travel there to see and determine the cause of the fire. If there are any victims, that is when we have to bring them back. We will still go. When we receive the call from anyone, we will attend to it.

In terms of deterrent for bushfires, we do not have any deterrent but for us what is in the Act when we attend to any fire that is outside the boundary, they incur a cost so we have to bill them with our invoices. So, that is the only way to deter the occurrence of this.

The other one is probably open fire. Open fire inside the compound is not allowed. You cannot do any open fire in your compound. That is why in most instances, members of the public, mostly those living in towns and cities, and we have experienced that several times, they do call NFA and request us to help them put out fire coming from their backyard or neighbour's backyard who are probably burning rubbish. Our people will also advise them that that is not allowed and there is penalty for that. If we are going to impose a penalty for people who are doing open fire within the municipal boundary, you can contact the Director Local Government, they are the ones who issue

penalty. It is enacted in the Environment Act where they penalise those who do open fire. Penalty is around \$10,000, I think, if you are caught in that. So, we have not actually implemented that because I do not think that anyone can pay that \$10,000 penalty.

Liaison officer on social media, yes, we have a Media Liaison Officer who is looking after our social media and directly liaising with all the media outlets in Fiji. Recently, our Media Liaison Officer resigned from NFA and we have recruited another one who is there and we have continued work on attending to our various sources of reaching out to members of the public in terms of social media. Have I answered your questions, Madam?

HON. S. KIRAN.- Yes, thank you Sir.

MR. P. SOWANE.- Thank you very much, Madam.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- I just want to ask at least three questions from the presentation that has already been done. First, we are discussing a seven year old plan. Correct me if I am wrong, this is the 2016 Report.

Moving forward, to help us in deliberating in Parliament, we need real time information and now we are deliberating on this 2016 Report. The way forward, how do we get our report on time because currently some of the organisations that we are dealing with, reports are from 2020, 2021 and up to 2022. I believe there is a lot to be done to help us get updated with real time information while deliberating in Parliament. We need to talk on real time information. Can NFA give us updated information in the future as we move along in terms of submitting your annual reports? That is the first one. What are your plans in future?

MR. P. SOWANE.- Thank you, honourable Vanawalu. Yes, of course, this is a big challenge for NFA in terms of reporting. As I have alluded to earlier, these are all historical data and no one wants to talk about historical data. Yes, this is an internal issue for NFA. I think back at that time, there was shift of Finance Officers who had resigned from the Department - NFA and had moved on, leaving all these to the junior staff to do all these.

However, as I have mentioned, these are all our internal processes but to update honourable Members, right now, NFA is ready to submit up to 2018. We are about to finalise the 2019 Annual Report within this financial year. So, as soon as we have completed the 2019, the 2020, 2021 and 2022 will follow on, Madam Chairperson. So we are trying to update all our Annual Report within this year before December. We are trying to hardest to try and bring it up quickly. Thank you.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- My second question is on Question No. – TPAF Grant and I believe it is a levy. Manager Finance, if I am correct on Question 5 – Table – TPAF Grant - \$28,582 - TPAF Grant claimable training conducted by the Authority.

I believe there are certain criteria when you talk about levy. What is the percentage of the money that you managed to recoup? They are categorised into three different levels of achievement in your levy in percentage.

MR. S. JEET.- Thank you, honourable Member. At this point in time, I may not be able to tell you exactly what the rates are but, yes, we can furnish this information in writing later.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Thank you. Through you, Madam Chairperson, with reference to Question 11 - the \$2.5 million held to maturity which refers to short-term investments that are with Merchant Finance Ltd, for Committee reference, where does this money actually come from?

MR. S. JEET.- Thank you, honourable Member. This money is the returned earnings that we hold and this is then reinvested on short-term deposits into the banks and as mentioned, the Merchant Finance Ltd. and Credit Corporation Ltd. This is money that is surplus and we will not be able to use in the near future and the need is towards the end of a financial year or so, these were on short-term deposits of six months.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I have another question with regards to the fire analysis that was shown in the presentation. You mentioned that NFA is working closely with commercial companies on trying to minimise commercial fires. What is NFA currently doing or what do they have in place to minimise structural fires.

I also noted that you were involved in the Review of the National Building Code, then you have identified the shortfall which is Electrical Section E. Apart from that, what is NFA doing to assist in minimising structural fires?

MR. P. SOWANE.- As I have said, structural fires are basically 90 percent to 95 percent on residential and only five percent to 10 percent on commercial buildings. We are empowered by the Act to inspect those buildings. Right now, like I said, we are only concentrating on commercial buildings and we certify them. Year in and year out, we go in, we inspect their buildings and when they reached the satisfaction that is required, we give them their fire certificate. That is not done to the members of the public.

The Manager Fire Safety has explained in the review, some of those thoughts, we are also discussing and the discussion has been with our line Ministry, to include NFA to be one of the approval agents for vetting residential plans. That is one thing that we are allowed to do.

We do not even know what type of material they are using in their homes. Most of the residential owners will look at the most cheapest way to get their home constructed. So, he was talking about the fire resistant level of building materials. We have not actually put a strict measure on the types of material that they need to build their house.

He was talking about when there is fire, the material itself will have that fire resistant capability to be able to fight with the fire before our fire fighters arrive at the scene. Before it is actually burnt down, we are already there, like two hours. Right now, we have a two hours' time given when the material itself are fighting with the fire to avail our people to come and check it.

Madam Chairperson, our focus now is with higher fire incidents and that is with residential. If I am going to sectorise the types of residential that is on the fire burning every now and then, you will never find any residential within the Namadi Heights where the buildings are able to afford the materials that I am talking about. But the fires are mainly on these areas outside Suva, like Nadera, Kinoya and other informal areas. I am sorry to say that when we go and do the investigation, they always say that NFA is always late. Yes, of course, we come in late because they are using building materials that is unable to resist fire. I can say that it is probably like a firewood. It is easily burnt.

What we are doing about it? We are having this community framework. We are trying to roll it out. The other one which is the best way to do it is to go through the Building Code. Once that is done, I think it will give us everything that is required to reduce the unwanted fires in the community.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- On Question No. 13, you talked about your \$2 million current liabilities. Are there ways and means that you have cleared some of these trade creditors - talking about good book, transparency?

MR. S. JEET.- Yes, these liabilities are certain liabilities when orders are given, the project or work is not completed in the same financial year so it rolls in the next financial year and is fully paid once the work has been completed. Sometimes purchase orders are issued, goods coming late and NFA's nature is such that most of our equipment are specialised and when we buy them, they are not available on the shelves. They have to be bought from overseas.

HON. S. KIRAN.- So, it is cleared.

MR. S. JEET.- It has been cleared. All these payments have been cleared in the following financial year.

HON. S. KIRAN.- You have trained a lot of highly specialised people, I wonder about your HR retention - it is not mentioned anywhere. I just pick on what was earlier said on compromised electrical items and a lot of electrical fires due to unregistered people doing the installation. I am just wondering whether there is any control or the Authority has any powers to look at the things they import and raise that? Also is there any register whether to know that someone who is doing installation of electricals in their house are actually registered, how do people know that?

MR. Q. MOCEITAI.- On electrical appliances that are being imported to Fiji, NFA also sits in the midst of a committee that works under MCTTT at the moment, who have been looking through 18 electrical appliances. Five have been approved holistically by the working group. So, NFA is part of that group being run by MCTTT.

In terms of registered electrical contractors, that is been left solely to EFL. Perhaps, Manager Legal will elaborate more if there is existing partnership between NFA but that is something that the National Building Code is planning to enforce but still in draft form to implement, that every electrical design system must be done by a certified electrical contractor. Before it used to be done by anyone who knows how to plant in two greens two whites, but he has to be certified with qualifications of that particular company and registered through EFL. Then upon that provision of those documents we can work towards the approval of that application whether it is commercial, industrial or residential lot.

HON. S. KIRAN.- How is your HR retention since you have highly qualified people who are very highly trained?

MR. P. SOWANE.- Madam Chairperson and honourable Kiran, for NFA, the HR retention, I think it is probably best that I give it to Manager Legal to talk about the Act in terms of PSC. Right now, the Government's new policy for retirement is 60 years. I will ask Manager Legal to explain on that.

MR. E. RADIO.- Honourable Kiran, in terms of HR retention, I believe we have a high retention rate rolling over from all the years. Even though they are highly trained and because we offer good remuneration packages within the National Fire Authority as well as the allowances that we give, especially for our fire drivers, ambulance drivers, who are in demand, so we give them allowances.

On the retirement policy, as mentioned by the CEO, we have recently reviewed that and increased it to 60 years. The policy under the previous Government was 55 years but we do not come under the Civil Service Act. That is why we have been able to increase our retirement age up to 60 years old. You have the option to retire at 55 years because of the FNPF benefits, but if you still want to work and you still have the capability and NFA still needs you, you can still be employed until you reach the age of 60 years.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- *Vinaka*, if there are no more questions, I would like to take this time to thank the honourable Members for availing themselves to be at the submission this afternoon.

(Vote of Thanks by Madam Chairperson)

The Committee was adjourned at 1.30 p.m.

Appendix 3

Supplementary response  
received from National Fire  
Authority

### **Supplementary questions – NFA 2016 annual report (7 months period)**

1. Under miscellaneous income NFA mentioned to receive rental income of premises from Vodafone. The committee would like a list of the premises rented to Vodafone and the income received during the 7 months period?

#### **Response**

**1.2 The Nausori Fire Station leases a part for the station for the installation of a radio base station and rented at \$700VEP a month.**

**1.2 The Suva Fire Station leases a space for the establishment of a radio station at \$1200 VEP a month.**

2. Can NFA provide data on the number of buildings in Fiji that are above eight (8) floors (a breakdown by district)?

#### **Response**

##### **Western - 1**

**Nalagi 9 stories**

##### **Central Eastern - 8**

**Suvavou 9 stories**

**Kadavu 8 stories**

**Tappoo City 9 stories**

**Suva Central 8 stories**

**Reserve bank 10 stories**

**One Apartment 8 stories**

**Yue Lai 8 stories**

**WG Building 28 Stories**

##### **North - 0**

3. Can NFA provide the status on the request to have a Fire Fighter Academy the training facility for the firefighting trainees?

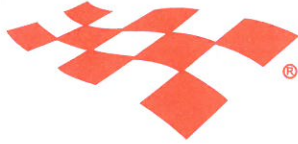
#### **Response**

**3.1 NFA is currently seeking donor funding for the construction of the NFA Fire Academy in Navakai, Nadi.**

## Appendix 4

Additional information obtained  
from the site visitation





**NFA**  
NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY  
FIJI ISLANDS

Always Ready

HQ Argo Street, Walu Bay, P O Box 207, Suva, Fiji

P +679 3312 877 / +679 3312 145 F +679 3303 348

E fireservice@connect.com.fj W www.nfa.com.fj

4<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Hon. Alitia Bainivalu  
Chairperson  
Standing Committee for Social Affairs  
Parliament of the Republic of Fiji  
PO Box 2352  
Government Buildings  
**SUVA**

Dear Sir

### **Clarification of Issues on the National Fire Authority Annual Report 2016**

We are in receipt of your email of 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in relation to questions pertaining to the National Fire Authority's 2016 Annual Report. We provide our response as follows:

#### **Challenges**

1. **Limited accommodation units for stations to cater for the increased number of officers. Most officers travel from home residence to the station due to the lack of accommodation units, for instance most officer's travel beyond 15 km to get to the station but also, they spend most of the time in the station as travelling day in and out is a hassle.**

NFA is currently working on the construction of its new Taveuni Staff Barracks where land has been acquired. This project was placed on hold whilst negotiations were carried out with Housing Authority to build and rent to NFA given that our Officers are provided with housing allowances. This model was introduced by our former Minister as Housing Authority was under her portfolio at that time, basically, the idea was for Housing Authority to take ownership of operational and maintenance cost of the barracks removing financial burden from NFA. Unfortunately, Housing Authority could not accommodate our proposal due to unavailability of land and high costs involved to establish. With the low housing allowance paid to our staff, the return on investment would be uneconomical, thus we have to revert to our initial plan to build and own staff barracks in areas of scarce accommodation. There are risks in this arrangement where barracks can be rented out to members of the public for economic reasons and rent can be increased due to market demands which may result too costly for our staff.

NFA will revert to its model as initially planned to build, own and rent to our staff at a standard rate to cater for operation and maintenance costs. Barracks will be constructed in remote stations where rental accommodation is scarce namely, Levuka, Nabouwalu, Taveuni, Seaqaqa, Korovou, Korolevu and Navua.

2. **There is no training academy for NFA to cater for the officers. This is a burden for certain station to host trainings and workshops as they are not equipped to host these trainings. In addition, there is a new responsibility for fire to undertake that is road safety and handling hazardous materials.**

NFA is in the process of seeking donor assistance for a first ever specialized training academy at Navakai Nadi. Attached is the concept design of the project. The Project proposal has been submitted to KOICA through our Ministry via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The total project costs is estimated at \$10m to be fully equipped with latest training facilities and simulators.

3. **Allowances that officers are entitled to is not sufficient due to the high living standard that Fiji is currently faced with, therefore a review of meal allowance and rural living allowance for fire officers as entitlement (\$10 meal per day, \$70 per month housing allowance)**

NFA is currently reviewing its staff allowances and recommendations will be made to the Board when we feel that we are in a stable and sustainable financial position to implement them. NFA is also looking at increasing its revenue by the extension of fire boundaries, the implementation of Fire Service Levy on insured vehicles, in accordance to the National Fire Safety Act. Our draft cabinet papers on these have been submitted to the Ministry and we have also had discussion with the Hon. Minister for the increase of water levy of \$0.50 per month and fire service levy from 0.06% to a sustainable rate due to inflation over the past 27 years, as this fee has remained the same since 1995. Since the establishment of NFA in 1995 we had 10 fire stations, over the last 27 years our service areas has increased with an additional 11 stations across the country making it a total of 21 stations and increase of manpower and equipment resulting in the increase of operational and maintenance cost to stations, vehicles, and salaries whilst the revenue (fees and charges rate) remains the same.

4. **The stations only have basic equipment which cannot cater for emergency that fire officers encounter daily. Lack of PPE for Hazardous emergencies, reuse of PPE by officers due to the lack of equipment supplied. In most cases once this PPE is used it should be discarded as it is a risk to reuse PPEs.**

All stations have submitted their PPE for Hazardous lists which have been procured through the Government Grant of \$1.4m in the 2022/2023 budget (400 pairs of firefighting boots, 400 firefighting helmets and 600 pairs firefighting gloves, new sets of firefighting equipment's and 21 sets of firefighting equipment for first response vehicles have been procured and distributed to all Stations.

5. **Though fire trucks are maintained, the road condition is one of the major causes for damaging truck resulting in frequent maintenance of vehicle. Ambulance service in some stations is not available. This service is vital especially for areas far from health services and considering major number of vehicle accidents along the Suva-Sigatoka highway.**

Through Government Funding 2022/2023 NFA had procured 2 new Ambulances bringing to a total of 9 operational Ambulances. In the new financial year 2023/2024 Government have provided funding for the procurement of 2 more Ambulances to make it 11 in total. Leaving 10 stations without Ambulances. We have also converted two old matchbox type

Ambulances into first response vehicles which has been deployed to Levuka whilst the other is work in progress. One of these vehicles you must have witnessed at Levuka. Basically the initial objective of our Ambulances was to attend to fire emergency and road accident rescues. However, in view of our 24 hours seven days a week services, Government saw it fit for NFA to also provide Emergency Ambulance Services to the members of the Public. Hence, Government provides annual operational budget for these services. All revenue collected are remitted back to Government. Challenges faced by NFA in most instances is where the users refuse to pay for the services with the understanding that it is NFA's mandatory responsibility to provide these services.

**6. Reshuffling of officers.**

NFA is an Emergency Service Provider and our people acquire specialized skill sets that will require them to move from stations to stations based on needs. Hence under their employment contract, one of the conditions is that the Officers are expected to be transferred/posted to any stations or divisions when the need arise, given that they are provided with housing allowances. Since we do not have any institutional barracks around the Country, we station our people as much as we can closer to their normal residence whilst they continue to be paid their housing allowance.

**7. Network connectivity for Korovou Fire Station could lead to the delay in the response time to emergencies in the area.**

NFA has a centralized command Centre with the 910-emergency toll free number which is easily accessible from anywhere in Fiji. All telecommunications provider in Fiji are hosts of 910. Our Command Centre has communication accessibility to all our 21 Stations.

**8. Due to upgrade and maintenance of the station, Levuka Fire station has not undergone any renovations from 2006.**

Government has provided a grant of \$400k in the current financial year for the major maintenance and upgrade of facilities at Levuka Fire Station and the Station Officers' Quarters. Work is expected to commence soon.

**9. Wear and tear of accommodation unit in Nakasi Fire station.**

Nakasi is one of our new fire stations commissioned in 2020 (only three years old). The lack of care in handling tangible assets are noted, not only in Nakasi but in all other Stations. This has prompted the compulsory inspections around Fiji twice a year by the CEO to ensure that all stations are kept at the required standard. There are demerit points for non-compliance. The safe upkeep of each station is the sole responsibility of the Station Officers and the officers. When it is misused it will wait the next cycle of maintenance.

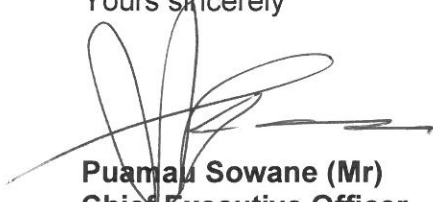
**10. Water problem around Korolevu area as to assist in fire emergencies.**

We are aware that there is no reticulated water supply at Korolevu Fire Station. However, the water used by the Station is sourced from a nearby water dam, piped to the Stations Tank which has an ecological purification system that treats water naturally that is safe to drink. In 2015 the department of Water & Sewerage from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport supplied our Korolevu Station with water monitoring equipment to measure the

quality of water. Should the quality of water is below the expected standard for safe drinking, water can then only be used for filling the fire truck tanks for firefighting.

We would be happy to provide you with any further information or clarification if you so wish.

Yours sincerely



**Puamau Sowane (Mr)**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**National Fire Authority**

4<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Hon. Alitia Bainivalu  
Chairperson  
Standing Committee for Social Affairs  
Parliament of the Republic of Fiji  
PO Box 2352  
Government Buildings  
**SUVA**

Dear Madam,

**Clarification of NFA Staff Allowances**

We are in receipt of your email of 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in relation to questions pertaining to the National Fire Authority's Staff Allowances. We provide our response as follows:

**1. Housing Allowances:**

Housing Allowances is paid to all Operations Officers (Fire Officers) as a benefit in addition to their base salaries to assist them in acquiring accommodation at their new allocated stations:

Rank	Allowance per Fortnight	Allowance per annum
Single Firefighters to Leading Firefighters	\$39.00	\$1,014.00
Married Firefighters to Leading Firefighters	\$54.70	\$1,422.20
Sub Officers	\$70.00	\$1,820.00
Station Officers	\$79.00	\$2,054.00
Divisional Fire Officers	\$197.40	\$5,132.40
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	\$236.80	\$6,156.80

**2. Driving Allowances:**

Driving allowance is payable fortnightly with salary to authorized Group 2 and Group 6 drivers. Both these categories of drivers undergo the following tests: - pump operators test (Grp 6 Drivers) and ambulance response test for eligibility to these allowances as follows:

Driver category	Allowance per Fortnight	Allowance per annum
Brigade Driver (Group 6 license)	\$40.00	\$1,040.00
Ambulance Driver (Group 2 license)	\$20.00	\$520.00



**3. Qualification allowance**

The Authority recognizes the value of employees seeking to gain external fire service qualification and will pay a fortnightly allowance for officers with IFE (Institution of Fire Engineers) qualifications are payable fortnightly with salary as follows:

Qualification	Fortnightly allowance	Allowance per annum
1. IFE Preliminary Certificate	\$16	\$416
2. IFE Intermediate Certificate	\$32	\$832
3. IFE Graduate Certificate and/or a Certificate of Fire Technology	\$50	\$1,300
4. IFE Membership Certificate and/or a Diploma of Fire Technology	\$64	\$1,664

**4. Meal, Travel and Accommodation Allowance:**

Overnight Absence: Allowances are paid to all employees for meals and accommodation if not provided for by the Authority for travelling outside of the normal working location as follows:

All Staff – Meal Allowances	Amount Payable
Breakfast	10.00
Lunch	10.00
Dinner	15.00
Incidental (when overnighting)	10.00
Accommodation (per night)	40.00

**5. Training Allowances**

Training allowances are payable to staff who undertake training on their off-duty days.

Training Allowance (per day)	\$13.00
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**6. Transfer allowances**

Transfer allowances are payable if staff are transferred by NFA to another station due to manpower shortfall needs. If a staff requests for transfer for personal reasons and is approved by CEO, then all movements will be at the staff's own cost.

Transfer Allowance (Single)	\$190
Transfer Allowance (Married)	\$395

**7. Relieving Allowances**

This relieving allowance is payable to officers who are required to relieve between fire stations within a Division.

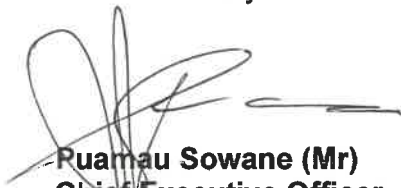
Relieving Allowance (relieve at another Station)	\$10 per shift
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**8. Ration Allowance & Standby Allowance**

Both these allowances is no longer in existence, previously both these allowances were payable separately however due to a lot of administrative process, in 2009, the Authority considered a review of all NFA salaries whereby these two allowances were consolidated into one base salary (annualized salary)

Ration allowances Standby Allowances	Ration - \$1,076.67 per annum Standby - \$834.42 per annum
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Yours sincerely



**Ruamau Sowane (Mr)**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**National Fire Authority**